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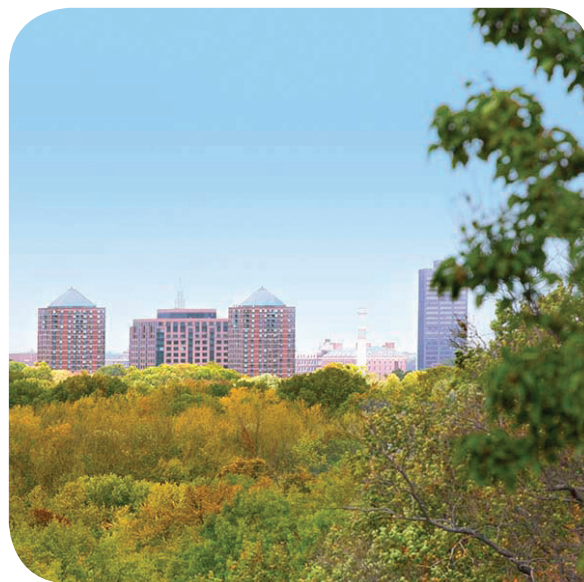
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west hartford LIFE

June 2017

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QUOTE OF NOTE:

“The second floor was completely engulfed in fire and it was rolling up the side of the building to the balconies.”

– Capt. Steve Winter

See story page 15

ON THE COVER

Marsha Howard Karp, Rick Fiocco and JoAnn DeWind have formed the Play-Reading Renegades at West Hartford Libraries.

Photo by Lynn Woike
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A Party with a purpose

Barbara Gordon celebrates her good fortune by helping others

by Lynn Woike
Editor

It's all about family and friends, and, if you're lucky, doing work you love. It was a friend who, in 2007, told Barbara Gordon how pleased she was with the care she received at the Breast Health Center at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center. When her daughter called, distraught, because she did not like the medical care she was getting at another facility for an infection in her breast, Gordon urged her to check out the Breast Health Center at Saint Francis.

"My only regret is that each party goes too fast. I plan for a year and all of a sudden, in three hours, it's over."

—Barbara Gordon

"That began a relationship with a hospital that I never thought I'd have. I was the kind of person who would go by a hospital and look the other way," Gordon said.

Her daughter had an appointment the following week, and Dr. Jim Frank performed the surgery.

"It was a whole different atmosphere," Tracy Gordon Fox said, comparing it to her experience at another hospital. "The nurse held my hand and hugged me and said, 'I know you're scared, but you're going to be OK.'"

She was so impressed with the care she received, she wrote a letter to the hospital, praising everyone, and signing it, "A Grateful Patient." Frank replied by email, saying it was no big deal, and invited her to call if she ever needed anything.

Three months later, her mother was diagnosed with uterine cancer and a tumor on her pancreas.

Fox, a reporter for the Hartford Courant at the time, said, "You feel like the ground's been opened up beneath you."

She emailed Frank who

arranged for Gordon to meet with Dr. Allan Mayer, a gynecologist, the next day.

"I had some symptoms I ignored," Gordon said.

She underwent 10 hours of surgery in April 2008. Recovering in the hospital, she got the news that by all indications the surgery was successful and she would not need radiation or chemotherapy.

Fox cried with relief, but she said, "instead of being super happy," her mother, "just sat there. I asked, 'Mom, what's wrong?' She wouldn't talk to me. She was just sitting there."

you survived.' He said, 'Don't look for an answer; there isn't any.'"

"All you can do going forward," Fox recalled him saying, "is try to do something that makes you feel like you're doing something worthwhile."

She and her mother talked about a fundraiser. Fox saw her mother perk up when she suggested calling their doctor, Frank, because he had a band.

Gordon wanted to do it for the hospital. Ten days after her surgery, she was making lists for a party at her home on Wood Pond Road.

"I gave a lot of political fundraisers from the time we moved [to West Hartford in 2004]. I gave Chris

Murphy his first one.

I gave Governor Malloy his.

On a very small

basis. A little brunch. But never anything like this where I reached out to people I didn't know," Gordon said.

She invited family, friends and neighbors.

"The first year we were so new at this. My daughter made the chili but we didn't expect all the people so it was a riot. Poor Tracy made chili for ever," Gordon said.

That first year, 100 people made donations that went to the hospital's cancer center. Now she gets 100 attendees and more than 30 additional donations from people who cannot make the party. It all benefits the Comprehensive Women's Health Center, where, she said, "they treat you like a queen."

"Many of the people who come have been coming for nine years. It's really about them because they support what I'm doing. Without them I could not do it. ... It's remarkable, the people are so charitable," Gordon said.

A PARTY WITH A PURPOSE
Continued on page 24



Barbara Gordon writes a thank you note to one of the more than 140 people who contribute to her annual fundraiser.

Photo by Lynn Woike



Barbara Gordon and her daughter, Tracy Gordon Fox, share a moment at the first party in 2008.

Courtesy photo

Eric Galm (left) performs at Samba Fest 2017 with Gideon Ampeire from Uganda, East Africa.

Photo by John Marinelli



Feeling the beat

West Hartford's Eric Galm founded Samba Fest at Trinity College

by Alicia B. Smith
Associate Editor

Eric Galm was in college when he found himself staring out a window into a bleak winter day. "There are people on the beach [somewhere] right now," is the thought he said ran through his mind as samba music from the record he had recently purchased played in the background. "I am in the wrong place," he thought.

His mind drifted back to the bright, colorful carnivals he witnessed as a child living in Brazil, when the streets would be filled with dancing and singing locals, and the music would literally



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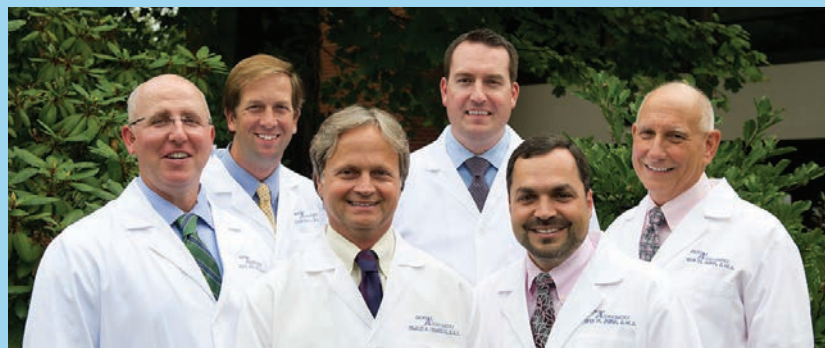
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Left: Eric Galm leads the Trinity College Samba Ensemble at this year's festival. Above: Eric Galm performs with choir members from Hall High School and Bristow Middle School at Samba Fest 2017.

push you down the road.

Galm stayed on at the University of Michigan, but knew in that one reflective moment looking out the window he would be studying Brazilian music.

Years later Galm is still as infatuated with samba now as he was as

an undergrad. His love for the fast-rhythmed music whose power comes on the second beat has never waned.

Galm was introduced to the music of Brazil when he was a child. His

father, a percussionist, began a program on Brazilian music at the

University of Colorado where he was teaching. The family traveled and lived in Brazil while he did his research and it was then that Galm was introduced to carnival and samba as a way of life.

Galm would return to Brazil

following his graduation from college to earn a performance certificate from the Escola Brasileira de Musica in Rio de Janeiro where he studied Brazilian percussion and would go back once more on a Fulbright scholarship where he studied the berimbau, a string instrument he referred to as "the soul of Brazilian music."

The culmination of Galm's study, practice and passion has resulted in his founding the annual Samba Fest.

The festival began when Galm, an associate professor of music and ethnomusicology at Trinity College, was teaching a class and hoped to have his students collaborate with local musicians. Working with Raymond Gonzalez, students were

"Samba is not just music, it's a way that can help you get through the day, and live your life with a lighter heart and step."

—Eric Galm



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introduced to the music and dance of Puerto Rico, resulting in a number of students becoming experts in this music. Galm was the founder of the Trinity Samba Ensemble, which also serves as an academic class.

Students were performing for one another and Galm wanted to find a way to share their music with a broader community.

"We set up on the steps of the Austin Arts Center," he said.

It was not long before he invited craft vendors to come in and local groups to disseminate information while the music played – and the Samba Fest was born.

Early on, Galm received a grant to work with local musicians who were soon incorporated into the event.

"It's grown and grown," he said.

The first four Samba Fests were held on campus, then it moved to Mortensen Riverfront Plaza for several years before returning to Trinity College this year.

This year, about a dozen musicians from Brazil performed, along with a combination of singers from King Philip Middle, Bristow Middle and Hall High schools.

"I developed a few arrangements of Brazilian songs for choral groups," Galm said. "Boy, they really got the day off to a great start."

He added that for years he had a sound in his head that he wanted to turn into different performances and the high school students were able to realize his vision this year.

"The music they were making at this level exceeded my expectations," Galm said.

Describing himself as an ethnomusicologist, which he defined as "a musical anthropologist," he said, "I look at music in a cultural context."

Samba fits into this perfectly; for Brazilians it is a way of life, Galm said. At just about any time of day there are people out and about on the streets in Brazil and they are singing, whether it's while they wait for the bus or walking to work.

"Samba creates a communal philosophy and space for communal conversation," Galm said. "Samba is not just music, it's a way that can help you get through the day, and live your life with a lighter heart and step."

Samba is often played with a variety of instruments with each hav-

ing their own rhythmic identity, he explained.

"That is what makes it sing and dance," he said.

One such instrument is the berimbau, a string instrument with roots in Africa, which is often associated with capoeira – a combination of dance and martial arts.

In 2010, Galm published a book about the instrument, researching its origins and use in the popular music of today.

"It's the first book that has talked about this music instrument and how deeply integrated it is in Brazilian music, culture and as a symbol within and beyond Brazil," Galm said. "It's an icon of Brazil."

Less than a week after the 2017



Photo by Alicia B. Smith

Eric Galm, Associate professor of Music at Trinity College, is the founder of Samba Fest.

Samba Fest, Galm was thinking ahead to the 2018 event. One of his goals is to bring community groups from Brazil to Connecticut to discuss their similarities and differences.

"One thing that is also part of my mission, it's not just to educate college seniors and audiences, but the second generation of Brazilians, be a way for them to connect with their cultural heritage, too." **WHL**



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Courtesy photo

Fields of dreams

West Hartford Little League Celebrates 15 seasons

by Alicia B. Smith
Associate Editor

When it comes to baseball, the idea of “if you build it, they will come,” has often been used to inspire dreams.

When four local residents thought about developing a baseball league that would enable any child who wanted to learn and play the game to do just that, they paused to consider if their idea was plausible. If they built it, would anyone come?

They did. They stayed. And they played.

That first season in 2002 saw 300 children join West Hartford Little League and since then the league has had a steady participation of more than 600 children ages 4 to 12.

West Hartford residents Ronit Shoham, Mark Baral and Doug Punt first met at the home of Scott Franklin to discuss their idea. Each had been involved in youth sports or had children that wanted to play baseball. Based on their experiences the group was determined to create a league that had 100 percent participation for anyone who registered to join.

“When you run a sports league you try to be as inclusive as possible,” Franklin said. “Our mission really [was] to create a league that is fun

for not only all the players but all the participants.”

“It wasn’t easy to do,” Franklin said.

Among the challenges the group faced was creating a new league when a long-established baseball league already existed in town. They also had to form a corporation, apply for nonprofit status, become a charter member of Little League, develop bylaws and, most importantly, find a place to play.

Finding a place to play was perhaps the most challenging part and the league spent its first season in more of an itinerant manner, playing on ballfields at private schools, town fields, at Little League Eastern League Headquarters in Bristol and holding their opening day at New Britain Stadium.

“We thought outside the batter’s box,” Franklin said.

Among the many distinctions of West Hartford Little League is no draft is held to select players for teams. Rather, the organization holds a group practice. Each player is given a number and is anonymously rated as they scrimmage. The ratings are fed into a computer system that creates balanced teams.

“The goal at the beginning of the year is that every team has an equal opportunity to win,” Baral said. “We are not here to grow pro baseball players, we just want them

Scott Franklin, Ronit Shoham and Mark Baral founded West Hartford Little League with the goal of ensuring that any local child who wanted to play baseball could do so.

Photo by Alicia B. Smith



to know the game, love the game, grow camaraderie, grow to be parents who coach their kids.”

“We are really trying to get the kids to love the game,” Franklin said.

Players are not pigeonholed into being an infielder or an outfielder, rather, each player rotates through each position. Coaches also move around within the league and each season coach a different group of children.

“It creates camaraderie in the league,” Shoham said. “Being fair is not the opposite of competitiveness.”

The practice of fairness and play for all extends to the coaching staff, too. The league is part of the Positive Coaching Alliance, or PCA, which offers seminars for coaches and parents about how to create a fair and fun atmosphere

for everyone involved.

The seminars serve as a reminder to the adults that the sport is not about them, rather the focus should be on the players, Baral said.

“PCA really brings to parents and coaches being competitive but

“We are not here to grow pro baseball players, we just want them to know the game, love the game, grow camaraderie, grow to be parents who coach their kids.”

—Mark Baral

not at a coast,” Shoham said.

Franklin explained that one of the reasons the league was created was because he has talked to adults who said, looking back, they still hate a particular person because they were once rivals in youth sports.

When the league began, the founders were concerned no one

would join. However, 300 players joined and the program grew from there.

In 2005, the organization, as an expansion of its philosophy to enable every child to play, founded the Challenger Division for children with special needs. The first

year they had between 12 and 15 players.

“We realized there was a need we had not addressed,” Shoham said.

The Challenger Division now has more than

100 players.

In 2009, the Challenger Division began to fundraise to put in a Miracle League field – a specialized field with a rubberized surface for players who are assisted by wheelchairs or other apparatus that maneuver more easily on a smooth surface.

The Challenger Division raised

Off the field hits

West Hartford Little League would not be possible without volunteers and the organization is always looking for a few good men, women and even teens to lend a hand.

Parents of players – or anyone interested – are encouraged to volunteer to help to operate concession stands during games, coach a team or serve on the board. Games also require umpires, and the league is always looking for people to become officials.

Additionally, there are volunteer opportunities for younger teens to have an active role off the field, serving as Press Boxers who announce the games.

WHLL notes, “It is a great way for kids to be a positive part of the community.”

“Our volunteers have done a tremendous job,” WHLL co-founder Ronit Shahom said. “They do a lot for the league.”

For more information on volunteering with WHLL visit: westhartfordlittleleague.com



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\$700,000 and had help from players, including one who raised money selling bracelets.

The Miracle League groundbreaking took place in 2011 and was the first of its kind in New England. The field is located at the West Hartford Little League Complex, on property donated by the University of Connecticut. There are three baseball fields here, along with the Miracle League field.

"It's the only one incorporated in a complex with other baseball fields," Shoham said. "It really makes it like a whole family, siblings can play side by side."

Since its inception, West Hartford Little League has raised money for all its needs and currently operates on a budget of \$150,000. There have been fundraising campaigns for batting cages, new bullpens, concession stands, a storage shed and the manual scoreboard.

The league saves money by grooming its own fields.

In addition to the significant number of players, West Hartford Little League has 200 volunteers who are coaches, umpires, board members and concession stand workers.

Franklin said West Hartford Little League has been derided for being "the feel-good league."

No one involved is bothered by that.

"The bottom line is we are fair, but we are competitive as well," Franklin said.

Tyrek Robinson joined West Hartford Little League when he was 8 years old. He said his mom was reluctant at first, but "after the first day she knew it was the right place for me."

Robinson, who now plays outfield for the Hall High School baseball team, said his time in Little League taught him the fundamentals of baseball, including how to hit, throw and run the bases. He also learned to pitch.

"West Hartford Little League has always been an absolute positive experience for me," Robinson said. "When I was young baseball was my favorite sport, but I think after playing Little League for a couple of years the atmosphere helped change my mind and ever since I can remember baseball has always been the thing that was in front of my mind."

He will be attending Lasell College next year where he plans



Courtesy photos

In West Hartford Little League every player has the opportunity to play and develop their skills.

to play baseball.

Franklin played in Little League when he was younger, and even had the opportunity to attend the Little League World Series Camp.

"When I got there it was the most humbling experience of my life," he recalled. "I was playing with the best of the best and it's a big world out there."

Baral has experience coaching and was active in the Windsor Little League where his children were members.

Ronit had to learn the game as an adult. Growing up in Israel she knew nothing about baseball, howev-

er her daughter wanted to play and they learned the game together.

The trio continues to be active in the league to ensure the mission lives on.

"It's been a good ride," Franklin said of the past 15 seasons. "It's been a lot of fun."

The next project for the league is to install lights at the complex and fundraising efforts are currently underway.

"We've built something we are really proud of," Franklin said.

"It grew because there was a passion for something different," Shoham said. **WHL**

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Ramirez is Teacher of the Year

Three finalists
highlight excellence
in education

by Abigail Albair
Executive Editor



Luis Ramirez poses with a group of students outside Smith STEM Elementary School, where he is a social worker.

Photo by Abigail Albair

There is no typical day for Luis Ramirez as a school social worker at Smith STEM Elementary School.

As he sat in his office on a recent afternoon discussing his nomination for Teacher of the Year, he fielded

calls about students and their needs from colleagues both within and from outside the school, and answered periodic knocks at his door.

“Part of my role as a school social worker is working with students individually and in small groups. I work with children on

[Individual Education Plans], but there are many who don’t have an IEP who I also support,” he explained. “That support can be different, from mediating a situation to trying to help a student work through some difficult experiences at home that are spilling over into

school. We look at the whole child and what’s getting in the way of their academic performance and growth.”

As Ramirez ventured out onto the blacktop during recess, children ran up to greet him, a few with hugs. His calming and nurturing presence in their lives was palpable.

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“School, I like to think, is an extension of the family,” he said. “I’ve found it to be true in all my work that two major ingredients which play a significant role in education are a child needs to feel safe and needs to be respected. Those help lay a foundation for appropriate learning.”

Ramirez helps students navigate a variety of struggles, from post-traumatic stress disorder to coping with domestic violence or anxiety, depression and eating disorders. He also works with students who have been diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and autism.

In addition to facilitating efforts by Gifts of Love and the Conard High School program Holiday Helpers to benefit students in need at Smith, he coordinates the West Hartford mentorship program at the school, and has extensive knowledge of community resources to which he can refer students and parents.

Ramirez serves to support the entire student body, rather than one classroom at a time, and works in collaboration with administrators, teachers, the school psychologist and the school nurse, among others, all of whom he praised for their contributions to Smith as a vibrant school community. He makes home visits when necessary and stays abreast of evidenced-based practices to provide students with the best resources.

“I’m in awe of the incredible teachers,” he said. “West Hartford is very rich in a knowledgeable and giving sense. Smith is a very unique school. We have dedicated teachers that understand the mix of the population we have here. We have an incredibly diverse demographic and cultural community. That’s a great thing, but in the same breath it can also present different challenges. It forces us to educate ourselves about different religions, practices and the expectations of the school and help students learn without losing their identity and their own culture, which is so important.”

Children, he said, remind him of the importance of having hope and belief in others, and their ability to forgive and accept the differences in others is inspiring.

Ramirez himself is bilingual and bicultural. His family immigrated to the United States from Cuba and, he said, his parents instilled in him a strong belief in education and showed him “any good parent wants

more for their child than they had.”

He and his two sisters grew up in different parts of Hartford and West Hartford as children, something he said gave him a unique perspective while “working with families that sacrifice so much to live in West Hartford so that their kids can attend our schools.”

He added, “Seeing the sacrifices my parents made has had a strong influence on me as a professional and as a person.”

Ramirez holds a bachelor’s degree in science education and a master’s of social work from the University of Connecticut. He also served as an operating room technician in the United States Army Reserve for six years.

He worked previously as a school social worker at King Philip Middle School, where he was in the STRIVE program. Before that, he was a counselor for The Bridge Family Center, a community advocate for the town of Farmington and an educational assistant and certified therapeutic recreation counselor for The Institute of Living at Hartford Hospital.

He called each one of the “stepping stones” in his career a “blessing” and spoke highly of all the colleagues who influenced his journey through the years, particularly Superintendent Tom Moore, whom he called “an incredible advocate for teachers,” and Assistant Superintendent Andy Morrow.

It was during his work in Farmington that he met his wife, Laura, a guidance counselor in that district. The couple has two children – a 10-year-old daughter and 7-year-old son.

He said sometimes families are intimidated about working with a social worker, but said he is always understanding and supportive in his approach, which is influenced by his role as a father.

“Nobody wants judgment and I try to be very careful not to judge or assume. You can have similar cases with different outcomes. I really try to lower the walls about working with a social worker, that it is not a negative thing. I like to look at myself as just another adult in the building that sincerely cares about young people and their growth,” he said.

“Although it might break my heart to see young kids in so much turmoil and pain, it also serves as a reminder of so many needs that are

out there. Working through the scope of a school has given me a different lens. I treat the kids in the building and their families the way I would want my children to be treated in their own school building in the physical, mental and emotional sense.”

Outside of school, Ramirez is a sports lover. He coaches youth soccer and plays competitive darts in the Greater Hartford Dart League.

He is a fan of the Yankees and the Miami Dolphins, the latter because his family first came to America by way of Florida, and so the state held important meaning for him as a child.

He said he is “honored and humbled” to be chosen Teacher of the Year, and happy that the recognition highlights the role social workers play in schools, along with other support staff.

“I work with awesome people in this building. At the end of the day, it’s all about what we are going to do for the wellbeing and betterment of the child,” he added.

Ramirez also holds a deeply personal reason to take pride in his recognition: to honor his mother who was diagnosed with early onset dementia more than a decade ago and who is no longer able to communicate with her family.

“There are many important and instrumental people that have played a huge role in my life but my parents and grandparents hold a special place in my heart. Especially my mother, Juana Ramirez,” he said. “Being Teacher of the Year is important to me for many reasons, but none more than to make my mom proud of who I have become. I am just sad that she is unable to share this experience with me, since she deserves a lot of the credit for being such a loving and strong inspiration in my life.”

Pam Matway

Sometimes it helps to think like a 12-year-old.

On a typical Friday morning, Pam Matway’s Sedgwick Middle School social studies classroom is humming with the energy of young minds making knowledge connections as she moves quickly among her students’ desks, leading the children through an analysis of the average income per capita in Europe.

She uses relatable terms, telling students that the numerical differ-

ence between the country with the highest average and the country with the lowest average is a “very important number,” while the range for mapping the average incomes – the difference between the highest and lowest, divided by five – is a “kind of a big deal number.”

A poster on a bulletin board at the front of the room outlines things an “amazing teammate” does and says. They are resourceful, respectful and compassionate. They play fair, communicate and help others. They say, “It’s OK if this is not easy” and “No matter what, you can do this.”

Another sign has the words “I can’t” crossed out in favor of the phrase “I currently struggle.”

As students fill in the ranges on their map in different colors, music plays in the background and Matway and her students sing along.

“I feel like everyone is born with a natural talent, and I said to my dad once, ‘I think teaching is my talent,’” Matway explained after her students filed into the hallway once class had ended. “I think this is my niche. I think this is the thing I was meant to do and grow into.”

She began the Where Everyone Belongs orientation program at Sedgwick last year to help students transition to the school. She lives for the moments when she makes a personal connection with her students above and beyond the teaching of facts.

“That happens a lot. We have fun. We joke and laugh,” she said. “I feel like I am still a 12-year-old at heart. It makes it a lot easier to work with kids. I can get down to their level. I get them. I think I just try to enjoy every day with them and make the best of it.”

Though she said “all days are not perfect,” she enjoys the fact that each day in teaching brings a fresh start, as does each school year.

“There are moments when I leave here and think, ‘That was the worst day imaginable,’ but the next day is a new one,” she said. “If every day was just coming in to work with the kids, that’s the greatest part of it all. I love that every year you get to start fresh with a new group. Every group of kids brings a new dynamic. Every period brings a new dynamic. You get to reinvent yourself. I don’t think I’ve ever taught the same lesson exactly the same in 11 years.”

Matway remembers the first time the thought of becoming a teacher occurred to her. She was



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Above, left: Teacher of the Year finalist Pam Matway leads a social studies class at Sedgwick Middle School. Above, right: Finalist Anthony Wasley teaches earth science and marine science at Hall High School. His room is eclectic in science decor, including a more than 8-foot fiberglass hammerhead shark.

in a high school social studies class giving a presentation on Native Americans, and, afterward, a classmate complimented her poise.

"It sparked this idea that I could be a teacher," she said.

Having taught dance since the age of 15, the concept of teaching something for which she had a passion was not a new one.

"I was always really enthusiastic about dance. I always had a great time teaching. I was always excited when recital time would come and you could see [the students] be so successful on stage. This is the same thing transferred to a different content area," she said.

Matway grew up in Rocky Hill, where she still lives with her husband – her high school sweetheart – and 3-year-old daughter. Her husband owns Matway Farm in town.

She holds a bachelor's degree in history and a master's in middle grade and secondary education from Quinnipiac University. She has taught in West Hartford for her entire career.

"I've actually been in this room my entire teaching career," she said. "I've been very fortunate. I think it's kind of funny. It'd be cool if I retired here, too."

As she reflected on her years of teaching and the lessons she has learned herself, her eyes filled with tears talking about her colleagues, including the team leader she worked under in her department, John Baldwin, before assuming that role.

"Everything I do now as a team leader, I think, 'What would John do.' He has inspired me to be my best."

She added of the rest of her team, "I am who I am today because of them."

After more than a decade of

teaching, many of her students are now in college, though several of them and their parents still keep in touch.

"I think back to sixth grade and I remember my sixth grade teacher. ... To think that kids might have a memory of me is huge. Just to know I've made an impact on them in some way. Even if it's the fact that I can do the worm, which, literally, they think is the most exciting thing in the world. To know that I've had an impact on their life and maybe one day when their kids are in sixth grade, they'll remember their teacher and tell their kids that story ... that is amazing."

She called being nominated as one of three finalists for Teacher of the Year "surreal."

"I never would have imagined it," she said. "There are so many great teachers in West Hartford. I look at convocation and there are hundreds of us sitting there. There are so many great teachers I work with that are just in this building. Just to be considered a great teacher is incredible."

Anthony Wasley

A love of fish tanks and aquariums spurred Anthony Wasley's passion for science.

In his earth science and marine classes at Hall High School, he conducts hands-on laboratory experiences and otherwise works to engage students in an active learning environment to inspire the same enthusiasm for the subject matter he has always possessed.

On a recent Friday afternoon, his freshman students were learning about fossil fuels, and set about designing their own 40-minute lessons to teach their peers as a way to educate others and themselves.

"Rather than me lecturing them, they are all creating their own

authentic lesson with their personality in it," he explained. "It's student-centered learning."

Wasley has taught in West Hartford for seven years at Conard High School, King Philip Middle School, and now at Hall where he teaches freshman, juniors and seniors.

This year he will serve as the graduation speaker and, of the 378 graduating seniors, he has taught 234 of them, a total of 62 percent of the class. He had 179 in class one time, 45 twice, and 10 students three times in eighth grade at King Philip, ninth grade in earth science and then in marine science.

"This class, I have grown with them. I was such a young teacher when I first had them and they were so young, and now they're older and I'm older, and it was really special to have that opportunity as a teacher," he said.

Wasley led 15 of those students to compete in the Student Innovation Expo, where they placed first in their category in 2015.

He grew up in East Haddam and graduated from the University of Connecticut with a degree in environmental science and a master's in teaching from Central Connecticut State University.

"I wanted to be a scientist on an island studying coral reefs," he said.

For two years after college, he worked at Project Oceanology in Groton, teaching on a boat.

He said, of science, "It's simply the best," adding of teaching that he has an easy time connecting with his students.

"I feel like I can level with them," he said. "I love video games and Star Wars and Legos and pop culture. I would be really awkward at a work

filled with adults."

He keeps a stack of hand-written notes, drawings and other mementos of thanks from students in a drawer by his desk.

"When I get these things and I read them ... this is why I'm a teacher," he said. "I think, for me, when a kid says, 'I never considered a science major and now I am,' that's awesome."

He has written many college recommendations, and takes pride in being asked to do so.

His classroom is lively and fun, adorned with an 8- and ½-foot fiberglass hammerhead shark, complete with real shark teeth, on one wall.

A book, "Atlas of Fish," that he received on his 18th birthday sits on one of the classroom shelves.

A focal point in the room is a large saltwater fish tank that a previous class built and cultivated. Wasley received a grant from the Foundation for West Hartford Public Schools to create a documentary of the Hall High School Coral Project when the fish tank was being constructed, and his website includes a live stream of the tank.

His students brought together corals and reef fish from hobbyist donors and fish stores to minimize the amount of corals pulled from the ocean. Likewise, the students grow and frag corals to give to local hobbyists.

"This teaches students a deep understanding of the work involved in order to preserve ecosystems while bringing awareness of what corals look like and how they behave," he said in a write up of the project.

"I put a lot of passion into what I teach," he said as he checked his students' progress on their lesson plans.

Wasley has been a LINK Crew coach at Hall for two years, leading older students in efforts to help freshman transition smoothly into the Hall community.

In his spare time, the self-proclaimed "geek" is also a vegetarian and an advocate for animal rights. He and his wife are both scuba divers. They have a newborn son and two dogs, one of which is a licensed therapy dog.

With regard to his nomination for Teacher of the Year, he said, "I just feel like I'm representing the importance of science right now in our country and helping it to be recognized as such a valued academic that we rely on, but sometimes loose site of how much we need." **WHL**



Robert Howe III was named this year's Firefighter of the Year for his actions to save two residents from a burning building last year.

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by Abigail Albair
Executive Editor

When the tones rang out in March of last year for a building fire, the firefighters of Station 1 could tell by the sound of the dispatcher's voice that the situation was serious.

It was before 3 a.m. when Engine 1 – driven by apparatus operator Robert Howe III – rolled to a 40-unit complex on Kane Street. They saw residents standing outside, they smelled smoke and saw an orange glow coming from the back of the building.

"The backside is balconies and they're all close to each other. The second floor was completely engulfed in fire and it was rolling up the side of the building to the balconies," Capt. Steve Winter recalled.

There were people on several of those balconies, trapped by the fire, looking for a way down and calling out for help.

"The primary job of the driver is getting everyone to and from the scene safely, but also he's in charge of the pump panel," Battalion Chief Bill Kall explained of Howe's role. "The driver doesn't know when they're going to get a call for water, but when they do, [the firefighters] needed it two minutes ago because the conditions are so hot."

Howe was preparing to carry out his usual task that early morning

when two men came and grabbed him, pulling him in the direction of residents in need.

"I'm thinking, I'm going to go tell Capt. Winter what's going on," Howe recalled, but Winter had already gone around the back of the building to assess the situation and was separated from his driver.

There was no one nearby to assist and Howe wanted to avoid the people jumping, a decision one resident had already made before the department arrived on scene.

Howe grabbed a 24-foot extension ladder – one that usually requires two people to operate – and set out to rescuing the trapped residents.

"You can train to use that ladder by yourself, but it's safer with two people," Winter recalled. "He did it all by himself. I didn't even see the two people he rescued. They were up on the fourth floor. I had no idea he was making these rescues."

While Howe retrieved the trapped citizens, his thoughts kept turning to his fellow firefighters in the building, likely in need of water only he could provide at that time.

"It's almost like, instinct takes over," Howe said. "There are people that need to be rescued. I'm very concerned about my family – my guys – but they have smarts that the general public does not. They're not going to run right into a room without water."

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"I was hoping to throw the ladder and they'd never know I wasn't at the pump line," he added, but he was delayed because the residents were unable to climb down on their own.

The residents were in the building just shy of 30 feet up. That left a space of a few feet between the top of the ladder and their window, so Howe had to climb up the ladder and help the couple bridge the gap. Though he worked quickly, Winter and the other firefighters did notice Howe's absence.

"Me and two other firefighters are in pitch black and it's so hot. I'm on the radio telling him to charge the line, that we need water," Winter recalled.

As soon as Howe made it back to the truck, the water came.

"He saved two lives and was able to get back to the truck in time to get us the water," Winter said, noting that the fact that they were delayed momentarily waiting for Howe was fortuitous.

"Another truck hit the fire from outside and knocked down the heat so we could go in and put out the rest of the fire, so everything worked out for a reason," he said. "We needed to pause. It was a good thing, because it was a hard, hot fight."

When Howe was back on the ground, Engine 11 and Ladder 5 from Hartford had arrived and were able to rescue the rest of the trapped people. More than 100 people were in the building. Most self-evacuated, 18 were taken out by ladder, and although there were a few serious injuries, no life was lost.

"One of the things we are taught is, above all else, preserve life and then property," Winter said. "[Bob] absolutely did what was right to save those lives."

It was for that act of bravery that Howe was named this year's Firefighter of the Year by both American Legion Post 96 and the West Hartford Exchange Club.

Although he is proud of the department's work on that call and every call, he is humble and just a bit uncomfortable at the recognition.

"He is the epitome of the, 'I'm just doing my job,' guy," Winter said. "He is the kind of person that you need and want on your team."

The two residents Howe saved found him and hugged him as the fire became controlled, but he never saw them again.

That was thanks enough for him.

"I'm a below-the-radar person. I don't like public speaking. I like to be in the shadows," he said.

Howe grew up in West Hartford and graduated from Conard High School in 1995. He moved to Tolland 15



Officer Chris Tyler is this year's Exchange Club Police Officer of the Year.

years ago, where he is raising his three sons. A third generation firefighter, he has worked for the town of West Hartford for 17 years.

Despite the fact that fire service is in his blood, Howe initially thought he wanted to be a police officer.

"I always wanted to be different from my father and grandfather," he said, but a volunteer fire department was located across the street from the college where he was studying criminal justice, and he couldn't ignore the call.

"Watching them go out all the time I realized that was more intriguing than police work for me," he said.

He worked as a police and fire dispatcher out of the University of Connecticut Health Center before taking a position in fire security, all the while working toward a job as a professional firefighter.

He went to fire school and obtained his Emergency Medical Technician certification and tested at fire departments as far from home as Newport, Rhode Island before being hired in West Hartford.

In his spare time, Howe spends time with his sons – ages 13, 10 and 7. He also competes in barbeque competitions with John Oates, the chief of the East Hartford Fire Department.

Work is a big part of his life and he has loved his job since the start.

"To me, it's about camaraderie," he said. "I'm a big team guy."

He runs the youth football program in Tolland, where he stresses to the kids that family and then school come before football. "Family comes first and [the fire department] is an extension of my family," he said.

Police officers stand out

Chris Tyler is a crime fighter and Brandon Dudzinski is a strong community servant.

The two were characterized as such by Police Chief Tracey Gove as they were lauded for their excellent police work.

The department recognizes two officers each year – one as the American Legion Police Officer of the Year and the other for the same honor given by the Exchange Club. Dudzinski and Tyler were given those titles this year, respectively.

Tyler's father was a police officer, and because of that, it was always a line of work that interested him.

Tyler grew up in Rocky Hill and went on to play Division I football in college before joining the West Hartford department nearly seven years ago. Since then, he has served in the patrol division and on the Community Interaction Team.

"We recognize all sorts of officers with various talents. Some excel at forensics or training, some are great with kids, some do extensive outreach to the community, some have a knack for catching bad guys," Gove said. "Chris is one of those. He's basically your crime fighter. Not to say he's not community oriented, but every day he's on the street, he hunts for those doing bad things."

Tyler often lead his squad in motor vehicle arrests and in self-initiated activity while working a regular patrol caseload, Gove said, praising the officer for his maturity, decision-making and poise beyond his years.

"He was and is able to build rapport with those he meets, which has elicited much good criminal information, and which allowed him to help several suicidal parties get the help they desperately need," Gove said.

Tyler is a field training officer and a member of the department's SWAT team, as well as a graduate of an anti-terrorist program.

At the time he was named Police



Officer Brandon Dudzinski is this year's American Legion Police Officer of the Year.

Officer of the Year, Tyler was the recipient of three unit citations and three departmental citations as well as a merit award, and many letters of commendation, including for providing security to President Barak Obama during his 2013 visit to town and for lifesaving efforts when the 73-year-old father of a fellow WHPD officer was victim of a cardiac event. At this year's annual police officer awards, he was given an additional four unit citations and a police merit award.

"In the two years I've had the pleasure of partnering with Chris in CIT, I've been able to view firsthand his skill, intelligence and dedication to this job and the people we serve," said Officer Andrew Teeter. "Chris is absolutely deserving of this recognition."

In his spare time, Tyler enjoys spending time with his family and playing golf with friends. Police work can be difficult, as expected, but it is an engrained part of his life. Tyler said the challenges of the job are what he loves about coming to work each day.

"You go from the extremes from shootings where we're still looking for the suspect to calls where someone is actively giving birth. It's a different type of adrenaline each time," he said. "I enjoy serving the public and actually making a difference in lives."

Now, as part of the CIT, Tyler appreciates the opportunity to tackle deeper issues as opposed to handling one call at a time as he did in patrol. He appreciates the chance to work with children in his current role and help them understand the role of police officers and the help they seek to provide.

As a father of a 2-year-old, he has a unique perspective. "It makes it easier because I'm a parent," he said. "I can relate to the kids."

It is important to him to set an example of what an officer should be.

"It's someone who has the integrity

to do the right thing and enforce the law as it is and not as you want it to be," he said. "I think the most important thing is you have to lead by example. Be a hard worker. Be honest, and everything else falls into place."

Dudzinski has been with the West Hartford department for nine years and, according to Gove, has led an accomplished career thus far.

He joined the department in 2008 and holds a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Connecticut. He is close to completing his thesis for his master's degree in criminal justice from Central Connecticut State University.

Accomplishments include leading his squad in self-initiated arrests and cases, shutting down drug operations, recovering stolen vehicles, and arresting burglary and robbery suspects, quickly apprehending a sexual assault suspect fleeing a scene and apprehending two juveniles responsible for a rash of graffiti, to name a few.

"His interview skills combined with his rapport-building abilities – not every officer or detective has both – have helped him solve numerous cases and have helped keep our streets

safe," Gove said.

In addition to his policing capabilities, Gove praised Dudzinski for his "strong community servant side."

He has located lost children, assisted the Make-A-Wish foundation, assisted with a Ride 2 Recovery charity bike ride that came through town and he serves as a mentor to a 10-year-old Morley Elementary School student.

He is a field training officer and a member of the department's Emergency Services Unit, and as part of it has performed well at the Connecticut SWAT Challenge and the 2015 Snow Shoot Event. Gove called Dudzinski "unequivocally one of the most well-rounded ESU officers I have ever had the pleasure of leading."

The officer is proud of that high praise, as the reason he joined ESU was because he felt that area of tactics used to respond to emergency and high-risk situations was where his skills were initially weakest.

"You use those skills even on everyday calls. If you're searching a house, 99 out of 100 times it's nothing, but that one time – you don't want to bet on it being nothing," he said, adding that any situation can escalate quickly into a

life-or-death incident. "Whether it's a motor vehicle stop or an alarm call, you never know who is going to be in the car or what's around the corner."

Dudzinski did not always imagine a life in police service. In fact, at the time he graduated from UConn, he took the LSAT with the thought of becoming a lawyer. He ultimately decided law enforcement was a better fit for him.

"It did not even cross my mind in college that I would be a police officer," he said. "I love what I do. It's just about going out there and doing the job."

As the father of two young sons – age 2 and 3 months – Dudzinski spends his free time with his family. He and his wife are adventurous travelers.

He hopes people see police officers for the good they are trying to do.

"I hope my kids see [police officers] as I did, as approachable. I knew they were there to help me if I needed it. That's how all of us are here in West Hartford," he said.

At the time his honor was announced in late April, he had earned four unit citations for incidents including apprehending a home invasion suspect and armed robbery suspects, and intervention in a domestic violence situ-

ation that led to uncovering a stolen handgun, marijuana and ammunition. Dudzinski also received a merit award for recovering stolen property from a suspect wanted for a robbery before a homeowner even realized the property was missing, and a departmental citation for apprehending a drug dealer and fugitive from justice.

At this year's annual awards ceremony held May 19, Dudzinski was given an additional three unit citations and a departmental citation.

"He has been called a hardworking and well-rounded officer; one with a positive attitude who leads by example," Gove said. "It was noted that he regularly goes above and beyond and is a team player, and whether it's a town ordinance violation or a robbery, he puts his best into everything he does."

Dudzinski said the job of a police officer is at times a thankless one, and that his fellow officers all deserve recognition.

"With everything going on and the tough job that we deal with it's nice to be recognized," he said. "I'm given the opportunity to do what I do every day because of the amazing people, the men and women, than I work with." **WHL**

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Actors do readings of comedies in new library program

by Lynn Woike
Editor

There was no stage or curtain. A straight row of nine bar chairs faced arcing rows of audience chairs.

The actors all wore black, standing to deliver their lines from scripts contained in black binders.

Without sets, props, costumes or intricate movement, they gave a dramatic reading of Neil Simon's comedy "Rumors," kicking off the inaugural season of the Play-Reading Renegades at West Hartford Libraries.

Marsha Howard Karp started the group, explaining that the arts are not well funded and programs are being axed.

"I also heard that staged readings are considered a return of the art of readers' theatre," she said.

Libraries in Bloomfield and Middletown have similar programs that have been successful for almost a decade.

"It's a nice way to get people in. It's almost always free and the people who come to see the plays are really warm, welcoming, supportive people who love plays. They don't need the costumes ... props and music" to enjoy the performance.

She approached Joseph Cadieux, the library's head of programs and publicity, with her idea.

"He made it possible," she said.

"The Renegades support the

library's mission of connecting with the community, encouraging collaboration and creativity, and by using the library's space for cultural activities," Cadieux said.

He secured a \$1,890 grant from the Thomas F. Kilfoil Memorial Bequest of the West Hartford Library Foundation.

"Kilfoil was a theater lover, an actor, and would find much to love about this community arts initiative," Cadieux wrote in the grant application.

"Plays cost about \$100 each, for performance rights," he said, noting that everyone who participates is

"It's great for the actors. We don't have to memorize the lines, but we can still enjoy the craft."

—Marsha Howard Karp

a volunteer.

The season that began in April runs until November. Plays are the last Thursday of every month.

Grant money was also used to purchase the tall backed bar stools and binders.

Karp, who has acted on stage, television and feature films, has been the producer and host of WHC-TV's series "Cameras Rolling" for 13 years. She enlisted two friends: JoAnn DeWind of Newington and Rick Fiocco of Simsbury.

DeWind has been involved with

community theater since the 1980s, garnering three awards. She originated two roles for two Connecticut playwrights and has also been cast as an extra in two films.

Fiocco has performed in a variety of plays over the past few years, most recently at Theatre Guild of Simsbury, with the Plainville Players Farmington Valley Stage, and at the Carriage House Theater in Hartford.

"We all love to act," Karp said.

The three founders will take turns producing the plays – casting, selecting a director, coordinating rehearsals and promoting the performances.

said of the next time she acts.

"It's great for the actors," Karp said of the format. "We don't have to memorize the lines, but we can still enjoy the craft. ... It's so much more fun. There are no nerves. 'Am I going to blank on my lines?' It's very artistically satisfying."

Staged readings also require less time commitment than a full-scale performance. Actors have one or two rehearsals at the library and put on only one show.

"It's easier because everyone has their day jobs," she said.

DeWind keeps a database for the group of nearly 50 actors from which to cast parts.

"We're always hoping to add more boys and men," Karp said.

Cadieux said, "The Renegades dovetail nicely with the library's existing writing groups, particularly

the Connecticut Screenwriters group, which has been meeting at the library for over a decade. There is now a potential for live Renegades' readings of original plays written by the Connecticut Screenwriters, something we've never had before."

He conceived the idea for the screenwriters group in 2004 and has been its library liaison ever since.

"My own screenplay pilot, 'Libraryland: The Sitcom,' will be performed by the Renegades on August 31," Cadieux said.

For its first season, the Renegades



Photos by Lynn Woike


From left to right: Members of the cast of Neil Simon’s “Rumors” present perform in the first performance by the Play-Reading Renegades; Brenda Jacobson and Steve Yudelson read the parts of Chris and Ken Gorman in Neil Simon’s comedy “Rumors”; Sal Uccello (Ernie Cusak) and Ingrid Smith (Cookie Cusak) are the third couple to arrive expecting a party; Brenda Jacobson reads some of her lines as the other actors are seated in the order of appearance.

chose comedies including “Curse You, Jack Dalton” by Wilbur Braun and “Jenny’s House of Joy” by Norm Foster. “Also, we wanted to use our local playwrights,” Karp said. “It’s great for local playwrights who want professional actors to preform the script.” Jacques Lamarre is one such acclaimed, area playwright. His play, “The Wedding Binder,” will be read June 29.

Originally called “The Bider,” Lamarre said he’s rewritten the play and “this will be the first reading of this new version.” The Manchester resident who works at BuzzEngine, a West Hartford-based events management and marketing company, called the readings “a really great opportunity for a playwright working on a new piece to hear how the


audience responds.” “We hope to bring in provocative productions after we’re established,” Karp said. Deb Thaler, who sat in the front row for April’s performance, was there to support her friends. “There is a Connecticut theater community. Some of us have done professional work and some of us hope to do more and some of us are in it for

the camaraderie,” she said. **WHL** *The Renegades perform the last Thursday of every month. Doors open at 6:40 p.m. for the 7 p.m. performance. Plays are first-come, first-seated. The capacity is 75 and once the play begins, no one will be seated. Parking is in the Isham Garage and tickets can be validated in the library meeting room. More information can be found at <http://bit.ly/playreadingrenegades>.*



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long ago

The parking lot on Brace Road began with the purchase of property 50 years ago.



Looking back at West Hartford's history

by Lynn Woike
Editor

Theodore Roosevelt is quoted as saying, "The more you know about the past, the better prepared you are for the future."

This article relates happenings in June down through the town's history – information recorded and preserved in a vault in the town clerk's office. Knowing it can help us understand how we got where we are.

120 years ago: 1897

Selectmen held "an irregular meeting" June 7 in the town clerk's office for "the purpose of making a jury list." Thirty-two names were selected to send to the clerk of the Superior Court.

On June 14, at a meeting of the Selectmen and Sewer Commission, it was voted to authorize Chairman Everett Stanley to secure additional insurance as he deemed proper for the new High and Center school building. Two days later, in a special meeting, the Selectmen and Sewer Commission chose Everett Stanley as chairman and Henry Whitman was chosen as secretary of the Board of Water Commissioners. It was voted that the secretary purchase a book for records of the commission.

An informal Selectmen and Sewer Commission meeting was

held June 18 at which it was voted to "employ an engineer to take charge of the construction of sewers in the east part of the town." Mr. H. B. Alderson was to be paid \$5 a day, or \$150 a month. It was also voted that he could hire an assistant for \$2 a day or \$60 a month. Alderson was to be given the use of one of the rooms in the Whiting Lane School House as a drafting room during such time the room is not used for school purposes. He was also authorized to purchase needed office materials.

110 years ago: 1907

Selectmen and commissioners voted June 15 to permit the Hartford City Gas Light Co. to lay a gas main "in extension easterly on the Boulevard and thence north and south on School street." In response to a petition, it was voted to lay a trunk sewer in the Park Street sewer district.

On June 27, a hearing was held about the proposed extension of street railway track by the Consolidated Railway Company. There was no opposition to the proposed layout and it was voted by the selectmen that the company be authorized to construct a single track railway in the center of Steel Road, extending about 700 feet.

100 years ago: 1917

The Board of Finance voted June 19 that the treasurer be instructed to keep all cash and monies of the town, on hand, in a separate drawer or box "under lock and key, which amount together with the balance in bank shall at all times be equal the balances as shows by his books."

Arthur L. Brown was appointed by the selectmen and commissioners on June 25 to be the protector for crops for 30 days. He was sworn in as a special officer by the town clerk two days later.

Although a list of dogs was submitted to the town clerk, dog warden James Livingston was "recuperating from a very severe attack of pneumonia," so action in regard to unlicensed dogs was deferred.

75 years ago: 1942

At the June 8 Town Council meeting, 21 residents presented a petition requesting alleviation of an undesirable condition caused by the accumulation of stagnant water in the grove north of Whitman Avenue; the matter was referred to the town manager. It was voted to appoint two members of the council, two citizens and the town manager to select a site and erect an honor roll for the listing of names of men and women of West Hartford serving with the U.S. Armed Forces.

50 years ago: 1967

The Town Council agreed to purchase health services from Hartford until June 30, 1968, and it authorized the acting director of finance to purchase property at 51 Brace Road from the Noroc Corp. for no more than \$34,585. It was to be the first acquisition of properties for parking on Brace Road. The acting finance director was also authorized to sell to the abutting owner the one-foot wide strip of land located along the northerly side of property known as No. 36-38 Foley Street for \$10.

A mill rate of 45.5 was adopted on the Town Assessment List of 1966.

25 years ago: 1992

The Town Council adopted a resolution at its June 9 meeting waiving the bidding requirements for food services and allowing the police department to execute a three-year contract with McDonald's for prisoner food.

On June 23, \$255,826.05 was returned to the Capital Projects Fund representing the unexpended amounts from 32 projects. They included \$0.08 from the Westmoor Park project and \$92,839.50 for asbestos abatement. Also at that meeting, the Town Council voted to be part of the newly formed Economic Development Corporation



The West Hartford Art League installed this sculpture five years ago.

Photo by Lynn Wolke

to help manage and market the region's economic interests, assets and needs. The cost was \$0.05 per capita on the 1990 census to be a full member for the 1992-93 fiscal year. That amount was to be matched by a contribution from the Capitol Region Council of Governments.

Unusually high waters June 5-6 flooded Trout Brook in the vicinity of Dwight Road that required emergency repairs estimated to cost \$53,000, which the council appropriated from the Capital Reserve Account of the Capital and Non-Recurring Expenditure Fund.

20 years ago: 1997

In response to a developer who began approaching the 172 homeowners in Astronaut Village asking to buy their homes, the Town Council scheduled two public hearings for later in the month. In reaction to the fear expressed at the June 10 meeting and later public hearings, the Town Council passed an ordinance June 24 requiring the director of health to provide notification if five or more residences within a half of a square mile were owned by the same person or entity. Another provision would enforce multiple dwelling maintenance and repair vio-

lations accumulated by the same owner.

The council also adopted a \$128,055,350 budget, and appropriated \$255,000 to move five portable classrooms from Whiting Lane School to Aiken (one), Bugbee (one) and Norfeldt (three).

10 years ago: 2007

At a special meeting June 27, the council adopted a substitute ordinance concerning appropriations for the fiscal year budget beginning July 1. It adopted a \$201,668,386 budget and set a mill rate of 38.63.

5 years ago: 2012

The Town Council approved the installation of a sculpture on public grounds at the West Hartford Art League, and also extended the league's lease.

1 year ago: 2016

The Town Council authorized the purchase of the University of Connecticut West Hartford Campus property, and appropriated \$20,000 to upgrade audio and video technology in the Council Chambers. **WHL**

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LIFE in the classroom

Morley students connect with their Haitian peers through art

by Alicia B. Smith
Associate Editor

Tap tap buses have made an impression on students at Morley Elementary School.

Students cut out colored paper in the shape of buses and decorated them. They have read a book about the privately owned and ornately decorated buses used to get around Haiti. Local students found them interesting and fun, and among the many new things they are learning about the island nation.

Morley students have connected with peers in Haiti who attend the Education Center in Deschapelles through art.

Principal Ryan Cleary said the program began last year when the school was looking for opportunities for students to learn about other cultures.

Through their research, the school found information on the Connecticut-based Crosby Fund for

Haitian Education, which provides scholarships for children to attend school in Haiti. Unlike here, public schools have a small fee to attend to cover the cost of tuition, books and uniforms. The organization helped to connect Morley students with those at the school in Haiti.

Morley Elementary School was also awarded a special initiative grant of \$9,200 from the Foundation for West Hartford Schools.

Cleary said while the goal was to learn more about a different culture, an issue that arose was the language barrier. Morley students speak English and their Haitian peers speak Creole. How can they communicate?

The answer is through art.

"It's a great way to communicate; it's purely visual," Cleary said.

Morley students record videos of themselves as they work on different art projects. They then ship the videos and necessary supplies to the school in Haiti so students there can



Photos by Alicia B. Smith

Clockwise: Art teacher Erica Stinziani shares photos from the art classes of students in Haiti; Elsie Muska paints pendants to be sold at the Morley art auction to help raise money for students in Haiti; Second graders were so fascinated with the tap tap buses in Haiti, they made some of their own; Stella Poulin puts a string on the pendant she painted.

spend time creating their own art projects.

Teachers in Haiti then ship photos back and, in some cases, the work or copies of the work their students have done.

"It has really taken off," Cleary said.

For starters, not only did Morley students have an interest in what the Haitian art projects would look like, but also, through the photos from the Haitian school, they began to notice other cultural differences. For instance, there are no walls in the classrooms in Haiti, there were fewer books there and each classroom had a chalkboard, not a whiteboard. Also, there were no computers.

These observations were the start of a conversation about the differences the communities had in terms of climate and resources.

A bulletin board at Morley has been decorated with information on Haiti.

"It became the center for a lot of meaningful learning here," Cleary said of the art exchange.

In one project, students here drew self-portraits, however, when they realized that the Haitian students would not have access to mirrors at school, they suggested their Haitian peers work with a partner and draw one another.

In another lesson, students studied Georgia O'Keeffe and drew flowers, later sending their finished projects to Haiti. This time the Haitian students drew flowers and sent a photograph of themselves back to Morley students.

Morley students are learning more than different art techniques as they work through a variety of projects. They are also learning more about Haiti and the students there.

"I learned if you had a lot of goats you are really rich, goats are a lot of money," second-grader Luke Cosentino said as he dabbed paint

Courtesy photos



Left to right: Students at the Education Center in Deschapelles, Haiti, hold up their artwork; art projects include portraits; A teacher in Haiti oversees the work of her students.



“It’s interesting – at first they noticed the differences but ultimately they saw the similarities.”

–Erica Stinziani

on a medallion to be sold at the art auction.

Sitting at the table with him was Elsie Muska who said she has enjoyed the artwork the Haitian students created.

“I’ve learned that they are a very poor country and love rides on tap tap buses,” said Katie Fay-Smith, adding that she was impressed with the Haitian students’ portrait project. “We used mirrors but they didn’t, but they did a really good job.”

“I noticed they use very bright colors like red and yellow,” Alex Martin-Caslas said of the Haitian students’ artwork.

“We really want to have that cultural connection that is authentic,” said art teacher Erica Stinziani.

“The most exciting thing is when

we’ve gotten the art back with photos of students,” she said.

While the project is focused on Morley second graders, Cleary said the program has touched the entire school. Following news about Hurricane Matthew, which struck Haiti in September, the Morley Student Council created magnets to sell at the May art auction with proceeds benefiting relief efforts from this natural disaster. Some art students have created special pendants to sell, on one side are encouraging words, such as “smile” or “hope” and on the other side the same word is written in Creole.

Cleary said some of the money raised at the auction will be put towards scholarships so more students in Haiti can attend school.

It is not only the students who are embracing the cultural exchange. Teachers are as well. This summer five Morley teachers will travel to Deschapelles to meet the students and their professional counterparts there.

“They’ll share what they know and learn more about education in Haiti,” Cleary said. “It will only strengthen our relationship.”

Because electricity cuts out so often in Haiti, it has been difficult for all of the students to Skype and get a better look at one another, although it is something the two groups are working on for the future.

Stinziani said her students were

especially excited to see photos that showed their art hanging in the Haitian classroom.

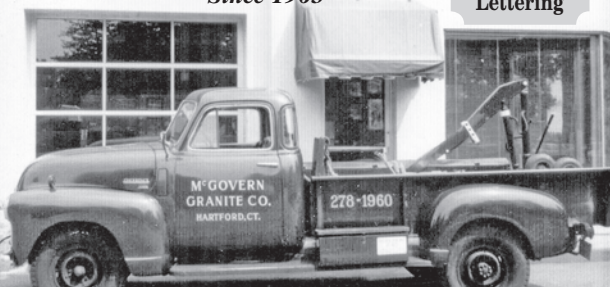
In addition to the artwork students send, they also have a list of questions they ask their new friends. Many are getting-to-know-you questions such as what kind of toys they have and how to say their name in Creole.

The art students are also learning about technology. One way to film an instructional video to share with Haitian students is to wear a Go-Pro camera.

“It’s interesting – at first they noticed the differences but ultimately they saw the similarities,” Stinziani said of her students. **WHL**

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A PARTY WITH A PURPOSE *from page 4*

Parties soon had themes. Mardi Gras, Hawaii, Mexico and baseball have all been celebrated.

"Last year we did the Roaring '20s."

This June the party – her 10th – has the theme of diversity. The menu will include a variety of ethnic foods and guests are invited to dress in the tradition of their heritage.

The band that has been playing the party several years is friends with one of Gordon's granddaughters.

The West Hartford Fire Department, "loved by all," volunteered years ago to cook, she said.

"They are the most amazing group of guys. They say, 'Don't worry about a thing.' They come in, they take over the kitchen, they cook the most incredible food you have ever eaten and they are just wonderful, wonderful guys, and they give us a donation on top of it, so I can't say enough about the West Hartford Fire Department."

More friends and their families

are helping with the food. One friend provides all the beer, another gets the wine, and a third serves as the bartender. Another friend offered to make 100 pieces of rugelach. A firefighter's wife and her mother have volunteered to make pierogi.

"Many of the people who come have been coming for nine years. It's really about them because they support what I'm doing. Without them I could not do it."

–Barbara Gordon



Barbara Gordon is surrounded by members of the West Hartford Fire Department at the Women's Comprehensive Health Center. The party was held there two years ago so attendees could see how their money was being used.

foundation sends a thank you letter, I insist

upon sending personal ones because I'm very grateful to these people. I could not do this without them."

She also hand addresses 325 invitations, each with a personal note.

Donations come in all sizes, some as much as \$1,000.

As the 10th party approaches, Vice President and Chief Development Officer of the Saint Francis Foundation Lynn B. Rossini stated, "We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to Barbara Gordon, her daughter, Tracy Fox,

Another firefighter's parents own a Thai truck and will bring Thai food. A friend who owns a Greek restaurant in Colchester is also contributing food.

The Saint Francis Foundation handles the bookkeeping.

"All the donations go there and I get a weekly report and immediately send out thank you notes, so by the time people come to the party, they've already received a thank you note," said Gordon, who writes each one by hand. "Even though the



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and the West Hartford firefighters for their tremendous outpouring of kindness. They have raised over \$175,000 to support our patients in the Karl J. Krapek Sr., Comprehensive Women's Health Center."

Gordon said, "Everyone is welcome. I don't care if they give me \$20, they get to know the hospital." She admitted she "gets to embarrass the staff" who attend by introducing them and lavishing them with praise.

Her doctor, Mayer, comes every year.

"We've become very good friends," she said.

Mayer said in a statement, "I originally met Barbara as a patient. She approached her own medical

care in an intelligent, proactive and fearless fashion. From the beginning, she was clear and focused: 'I am going to beat this!'

"The first year following her diagnosis, Barbara started to give back. She was determined to say thank you. She initiated a campaign to recognize and support the St.

Francis Hospital Comprehensive Women's Health Center. Her annual fundraisers bring together people from all professions, neighborhoods and communities. She makes sure it is a fun event filled with hope and goodwill. She really shows how a positive attitude and fun-loving spirit can be contagious. For her, the end

goal is to promote competent and comprehensive health care for all women. After 10 years, I am honored to consider her both a respected patient and a beloved family friend."

Talking about her other doctor, Frank, Gordon said, "I referred to him as Dr. Cutie. My dog is named [Cutie] after my doctor."

Mother and daughter also collaborate to come up with baskets of merchandise and gift certificates for a teacup auction.

At the party, Gordon takes time "to honor all my friends over the last nine years now who died from cancer." A list, that gets longer each year, includes her sister, Sen. Ted Kennedy and many friends.



A hundred people gather on the lawn of Barbara Gordon's home for her annual fundraising party each June.



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Among the guests in 2015 are Dr. John F. Rodis, president of Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center, and Lt. Gov. Nancy Wymann.

Foundation members do much of the set up and take down. They, too, are like family. Gordon serves on the foundation's board, and she and her daughter are incorporators. "Nobody asks me to promote the hospital. I do it because I really believe in it. I am so into this hospital," she said. "It's just such a wonderful thing to have all these people understand how important it is to support a hospital, especially in this day and age. ...

"You know the expression: you make lemonade out of lemons. I took what was a scary situation – I'm not kidding – and turned it into some of the happiest days of my life. ... It's been an amazing journey for me. While those nine days [in the hospital] were not fun, basically, I've forgotten all the bad stuff. I have made so many new friends. My only regret is that each party goes too fast. I plan for a year and all of a sudden, in three hours, it's over."

The minute this year's party ends, she will start planning the next one.

"The minute everybody

leaves, that night in fact, my family is

not allowed to leave until we get a theme for the next year."

Fox said of her mother, "This party has helped her with her survivor skills."

"Besides my family and a job that I love, this is what keeps me going, really and truly," Gordon said.

The job is working for the speaker of the Speaker of the House

of Representatives. At 81 – after having owned a fish market with her husband, served as executive director Connecticut Seafood Council and as a proof-reader at the Jewish Ledger – she has no plans of retiring.

"I'm the luckiest person with this job. I walk in and 20 years drop away ... [because] I'm with young people," she said.

Her political involvement began at age 17, handing out leaflets for a friend of her father's in front of the Blue Hills Fire Station in Hartford. "I got bit by the bug," she said.

While she's been involved in politics ever since, becoming the longest-serving member of the Democratic State Central Committee where she just gave up the position of secretary after 22 years, Gordon said, "This hospital involvement is so new and so gratifying. And I hear from my daughter all the time how important it is to take care of people."



Sister Judy Carey, Gov. M. Jodi Rell, Trinity Health – New England President and CEO Trinity Health Christopher Dadlez, and his wife, Eileen attend a party.

LIVING *your best* LIFE

Fox, who lives in Colchester, learned about that at Saint Francis' Breast Health Center, and now she has another job she loves as much as she loved reporting: nursing. While it's more difficult and the stakes are higher, "it does give me a better feeling at the end of the day," she said.

"I'm a very nervous patient," she said. With her daughter having to spend time in a hospital, then herself, her mother and then her father, Fox experienced different approaches to patient care.

"The first time I walked in [to Saint Francis], I felt like I belonged there. Saint Francis had life and I wanted to be part of it."

At first she thought of getting a public relations job, but caring for her daughter and then her mother made her think about nursing as her second career path. She took a year of prerequisites, went on to become a CNA, and worked at Saint Francis while completing her nursing degree.

"My mom's illness definitely catapulted me into [nursing]," she

said. Changing bandages and caring for her after she left the hospital, "I realized I could do it."

Fox now works on the general surgery floor in the tower that was being built while her mother was in the hospital, and her mother couldn't be more proud.

"I think she's changed," Fox said. "She was a person who hated hospitals, now she's the belle of the ball there. She comes up to my floor to bring us brownies. She's on campus a lot for meetings."

They are both part of the Saint Francis family, and giving back has been healing – physically and emotionally – for both of them. **WHL**

Anyone interested in supporting Barbara Gordon's efforts is asked to call the foundation at 860-714-4900.

Dr. Allan Mayer has become one of Barbara Gordon's friends.



Courtesy photo



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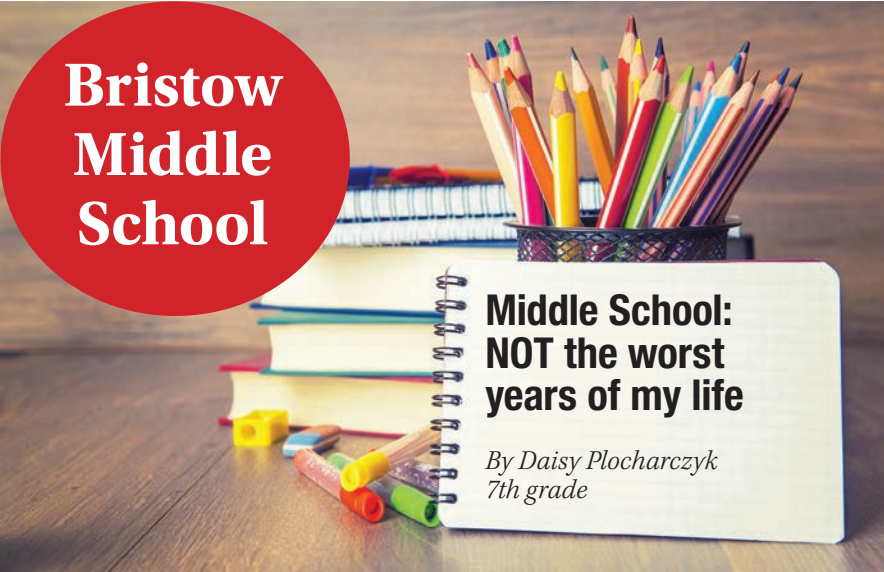
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Have you ever heard that middle school is awful? I'm sure that I have. All that hearing this common stereotype did for me as a fifth grader was make me more nervous about middle school. I believe that this stereotype may be true for some but is not true for me and many other people in my grade.

First of all, middle school has helped me meet many other people with common interests, and has helped me discover my main interest which is reading. Middle school has helped me meet people who have

read all of the same books as me. One of my friends and I even call each other the names of characters from a series that we like based on our personalities. Considering that I have found "my people" in middle school, you definitely will find your people.

Also we have much more freedom in middle school. True, we don't get to choose our own classes or walk out of a class room whenever we want. We do have time before school to talk with our friends or go to the library or go to a teacher for whatever reason. I use this time to

read naturally. We also get to have some authority over where we sit at lunch. Sometimes, we get to choose wherever we sit and other times we have to choose between a few different tables. When you decide where you sit you get to sit there for the quarter and then the next quarter you change. This may not sound like a lot of freedom but it is definitely more freedom than you had in elementary school.

You may still think that middle school will be awful because of homework or grades or things like that but believe me it is not that hard to handle. I personally got used to the amount of homework after a few weeks. You may spend a longer amount of time getting used to the amount of homework but trust me, you will eventually get used to the new amount of homework. Also, if you are worried about grades don't be. On your Power School account you will be able to monitor your grades and if something slips and your grades drop you will be able to bring the grade up with enough effort and perseverance.

So, now I hope that you believe me when I say that your years in middle school will not be the worst years of your life. 🍎

Forever?
By Leslie Pereira
8th grade

They say we have to grow up.
But what fun is that?
A wise man once said
"Growing old is mandatory, but growing up is an option"
We can stay young forever.
But how long is forever?
You see it may seem long.
But it's not long at all.
Forever has an expiration date.
Sometimes it's best to let go
Of forever.
Than holding on.
Forever can hurt.
The forever you had with someone or something can be gone in a second.
Forever can end at any time of day.
Yea, maybe we should grow up.
But we should hang on to that little
Child in us.
Not to hang on forever.
To hang on when we are in our Dark days.
Forever.
Such an odd word. 🍎

Underwater Word Find

Find the hidden words in the puzzle.

- CORAL

CRAB

DIVE

FISH
- GILLS

LOBSTER

MOLLUSK

OCEAN
- SALTWATER

SEA

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Y	B	C	S	C	L	O	K	N	P	S	D
V	N	R	E	C	O	R	A	L	L	I	M
S	W	A	V	T	B	F	W	L	V	K	M
J	A	B	A	L	S	H	I	E	W	O	I
Z	A	L	W	B	T	G	V	S	L	J	E
S	Q	F	T	K	E	C	O	L	H	H	Q
K	X	N	N	W	R	H	U	J	K	H	T
Z	U	R	A	Y	A	S	L	L	E	H	S
P	U	K	C	E	K	T	J	U	O	E	S
L	A	Z	D	X	C	R	E	Z	J	U	K
B	T	B	S	V	P	O	L	R	A	E	S
F	V	G	S	Y	I	B	R	C	C	R	D



Get Scrambled

Unscramble the words to determine the phrase.

A S E F L I E

Answer: Sea life

kids Voices

Duffy School What we learned

By Adrian Holzer and
Krish Dhingra
*The kindergarteners detail their
self-guided, interest-based
project on dinosaurs and
the solar system*

One day, Ms. Veilleux said to me and Krish – “Why don’t you guys do a project?” We were interested in doing a project on dinosaurs because they lived a long time ago and most kids in my class don’t really know about dinosaurs. Dinosaurs are interesting and there are many of them. They are weird because they eat each other sometimes and there are a lot of fish with gigantic eyeballs. Imagine seeing a fish with a gigantic eyeball the size of your head!

To research dinosaurs, we used a computer and five books. We presented dinosaurs to my class using a book of facts we made and a box me and Krish made together. The box was a dinosaur world with volcanoes, dinosaurs, and trees and flying

dinosaurs. To make our dinosaur world, we used clay, broccoli, and flat green felt.

My favorite fact about dinosaurs is that the brachiosaurus has a nose on top of his head. If he goes under water, he can breathe when he stretches his neck and puts the top of his head over the water.

When people ask me what I like the most about Kindergarten, I always tell them about our projects. Learning with Krish is so much fun! 🍏

When I was 4 years old, I visited the Space Exhibit in the Connecticut Science Center. I was fascinated with the idea of space. I saw a real rocket and found it really “cool.” I wore a space suit at the science center, took photos and dreamt of being an astronaut. I got interested in learning more about the solar system, the stars and the planets. And what a surprise, my best friend Adrian shared the same interest! So, when Ms. Veilleux brought up the idea of doing a project, we both got excited and decided to explore “The Solar System.”

We borrowed books about planets, stars and space from the Duffy library. We collected some amazing



Krish Dhingra and Adrian Holzer work on their self-guided, interest-based research projects at Duffy Elementary School.

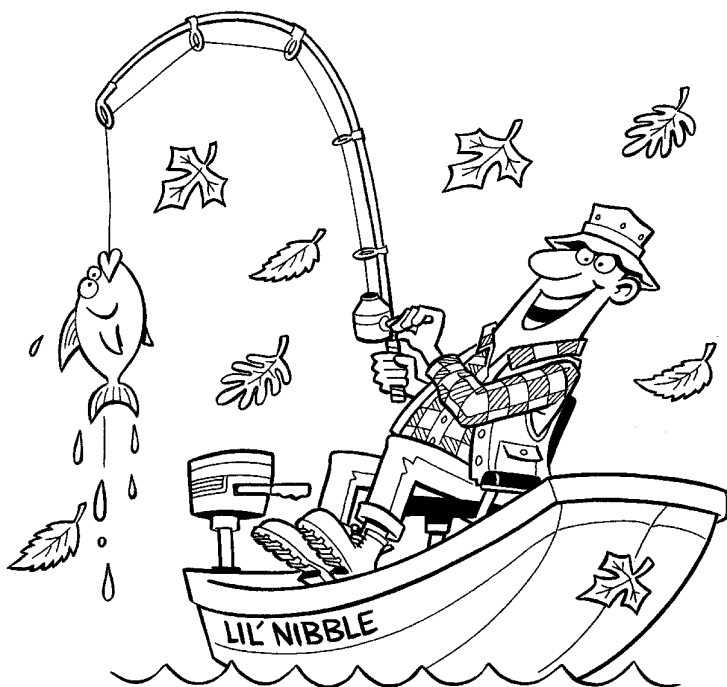
facts by reading these books and seeing educational videos. Did you know that Mars is the red planet because it has red rocks, that biggest planet Jupiter has 63 moons and that there are tiny planets called dwarf planets? Neither did we, until we did this project. We noted down fun facts about each planet and made a poster to share them with our friends. Once the poster was done, we did a presentation in front of our class buddies.

Since the solar system has orbits and planets rotate around the sun, we decided to make a 3D model! Our parents and Ms. Veilleux got us a lot of arts and craft supplies to make the model. Adrian and I had a great time coloring spheres of different sizes to make it look like planets. The model looked so real that we felt like we were astronaut’s moon walking around them.

This was the best learning experience ever! 🍏

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*How they
SAY that in...*

ENGLISH: Tree

SPANISH: Árbol

ITALIAN: Albero

FRENCH: Arbre

GERMAN: Baum

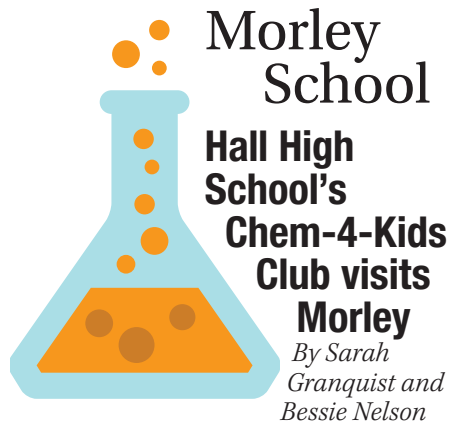
Did You Know?



SONORA DODD CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF A “FATHER’S DAY” AFTER HEARING A MOTHER’S DAY SERMON.



kids Voices



At our school, things are always happening. The most recent event was a chemistry activity. Hall High School's Chem-4-Kids club came to our school and ran a program for grades 3-5. There were many different experiments that we got to try, such as making a lemon-powered clock and blowing up a balloon without using air. The high school students ran each experiment. We also learned a lot about chemistry.

"I especially loved learning about chemical reactions, and bases and acids," said Sarah.

Each experiment involved using teamwork. It was so fun to see your experiment work, and when it didn't work it was fun to try again.

"At one of the tables they had a experiment where you put special chemicals that after a certain amount of time turned the water black," Bessie commented. "We got to try different water temperatures to see how long it took for the water to change colors."

This activity was educational,

used team building skills, and was most importantly fun! Thank you so much Chem-4-kids for coming to our school! 🍌

High school Reflections of West Hartford Girls Basketball

Editor's note: The following are winning essays for the West Hartford Girls Basketball Scholarship Award. Each writer won \$750. Julia Tannenbaum is a junior at Hall High School and plans to pursue a career in writing. Bonnie Wilder is a senior at Watkinson School in Hartford, and plans to pursue a career in physical therapy.

By Bonnie Wilder

During third through fifth grade, eighth grade, and summers, I played with the WHGBL and blacktop league. I was like any other third grader wanting to advance my basketball skill level and have fun. I was not good, nor bad, but wanted



to make some friends who could keep my athletic life alive. I gained confidence with my game and met some great people who were similar to me.

I left the WHGBL in sixth grade and decided to play travel basketball. I played through 7th grade but then realized I was missing out on a key component: having fun. That is when I switched over and played again with the WHGBL. I remembered how great my winters were. It hit me that I enjoy having fun, and sitting on the bench for travel basketball was not fun. I wanted to participate. The WHGBL has taught me that having fun comes before competition. Now I work as the time and scorekeeper. Every Sunday I enjoy watching players participate and have fun with each other. I learned a valuable lesson and will carry that with me throughout life.

As I pursue college, I have chosen to become a physical therapist. This will allow me to help people get back their "fun" in life whether that pertains to sports or otherwise. 🍌

By Julia Tannenbaum

From the first time I learned how to dribble until the end of seventh grade, basketball played a significant role in my life. Having the opportunity to participate for four years in the West Hartford Girls Basketball League



was an experience I've cherished to this day. I can still remember chasing my sweaty opponents up and down that little court, swishing three-pointers and intercepting passes, while our coaches and parents cheered us on from the sidelines.

But playing recreational basketball was more than just an enjoyable pastime, since amidst the fun and games, an important lesson prevailed. I identified this lesson during sixth grade, when I was assigned a school project on Title IX - the law that prohibited discrimination against female participation in education and sports.

Although sexism is still a pressing issue today, researching this topic made me appreciate how lucky I was to even have a league — never mind one as exceptional as the WHGBL — to participate in without enduring the harassment female athletes faced prior to 1972, simply due to their gender. I carried this awareness throughout the rest of my basketball career, and whenever I felt discouraged or defeated, I'd remind myself of the bravery these women displayed to grant me this opportunity, as well as countless other opportunities that potentially lie ahead. Although I don't plan on pursuing sports in the future, knowing my former teammates can, if they choose to, is an accomplishment that extends above and beyond winning. Because regardless of whether our team was ranked number one or number 20, at least we were able to play the game.

And that's what makes the WHGBL special to me. 🍌



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ANSWER: MOOSE



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ANSWER: THE BRONX ZOO



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ANSWER: ASTHMA



Can you guess what the bigger picture is?

ANSWER: TULIPS

The Church Of Saint Helena, which celebrated its 50th anniversary last fall, has shared a pastor with the Church of Saint Brigid.

Church changes

Three Catholic parishes to merge to become Saint Gianna Beretta Molla

by Lynn Woike
Editor

Three Catholic parishes – Saint Brigid, Saint Helena and Saint Mark the Evangelist – will merge to become Saint Gianna Beretta Molla parish effective June 29.

According to a decree by the Most Rev. Leonard Blair, Archbishop of Hartford, Saint Helena's number of registered households dropped 43 percent from 2010 to 2015. During that time, Saint Mark's experienced a 15 percent decrease while Saint Brigid's saw a 10 percent decrease. As a result, there was "a sharp decline in the sacramental activities of the three parishes" – ranging from 15 percent to 35 percent.

The merger was made "in an

effort to strengthen the preaching of the Gospel and to ensure the vitality of parish life," with a concern for the best use of resources, he stated.

"Being in close proximity and given the size of the buildings and the size of the parishes it was determined they could work together to form one parish," said Fr. James Shanley, vicar of pastoral planning for the Archdiocese of Hartford. "It gives all three of them new life."

Saint Mark's on Quaker Lane South is 1.3 miles from Saint Brigid's on New Britain Avenue, which is 1.7 miles from Saint Helena's on Echo Lane. Completing the triangle, the driving distance from Saint Helena's to Saint Marks is 2.7 miles retracing the previous

route, or 3.6 miles by way of Route 84.

Saint Brigid was West Hartford's first Catholic parish, established August 4, 1919. Since June 30, 2009, it has shared a pastor with Saint Helena, which last year celebrated its 50th anniversary.

Per a decree by the archbishop, Saint Marks was created in 1941 in response to a rising population of French-Canadians who had come to the area seeking jobs in local defense industries.

All three had a combined net operating deficit of \$240,000, but the rise in revenue after the merger will be \$1.2 million, Blair stated in the decree.

"I know that for some people, this is going to be difficult, but I see it as a wonderful, exciting, new challenge in the life of the church and this part of West Hartford."

–Fr. William Metlzer

Saint Mark the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church on South Quaker Lane will merge with two other parishes to form Saint Gianna Beretta Molla Parish.

Photo by Lynn Wolke



The three other Catholic parishes in West Hartford – Saint Thomas the Apostle, the Church of Saint Timothy and Saint Peter Claver – will remain as they are.

At least for the foreseeable future, the church buildings and the Saint Brigid-Saint Augustine Partnership School from the merged parishes will remain open and retain their names.

“The new pastor and the new community, together, will discern what will happen with these campuses. It’s not something that will happen immediately,” Shanley said.

He is also hoping that the Syro-Malabar Catholic community following ceremonies from the lower east coast of India that worships at Saint Helena’s will become part of the new parish.

Each campus has its own plusses and minuses including parking, seating capacity, handicap accessibility and condition of the building.

“They may decide to close and sell one; they maybe decide to use it

for housing, evangelism or a youth ministry. Pretty much the sky’s the limit,” Shanley said.

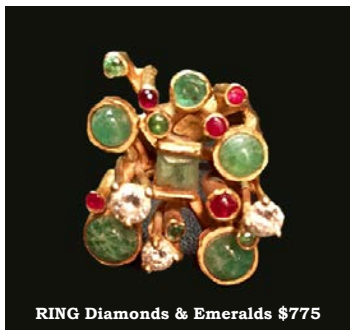
All parish records and historical documents will be moved to the Saint Brigid Church premises.

“We’ve been talking about it for months,” said Saint Mark’s pastor, Fr. William Mettler. “The people have known and have accepted the fact that something needed to be done for a very long time.

“And they all love their church – who doesn’t – but they also see that all the masses are less than half full. They look at their priest – me – and I’m getting old. I’m 73. I don’t have the energy I had 30 years ago.”

The office of Pastoral Planning of the Archdiocese of Hartford was created in 2014. Clergy, staff and parishioners were involved in evaluating their parishes over the past two years. Based on the data collected, a 26-member pastoral planning committee, working with the consulting firm PartnersEdge LLC/Teamworks International Inc., offered ways to position the

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“We’ve been talking about it for months. The people have known and have accepted the fact that something needed to be done for a very long time.”

–Fr. William Metlzer

archdiocese to best meet the needs and challenges. The Office of Pastoral Planning will help implementing the pastoral plan for the restructuring of the archdiocese, which includes Hartford, Litchfield and New Haven counties – was in response to Pope Francis’ call to “review and renew our parishes.”

In the archdiocese, 68 parishes will remain as they are while 144 will be involved in mergers resulting in 59 new parishes of two to six parishes, and 26 church buildings will close. Currently, 212 parishes exist; following implementation there will be 127.

Fr. Joseph Devine has been named the new pastor while Metlzer will become a senior parochial vicar, a position he called “equivalent to semi-retirement.”

“I know Fr. Joseph Devine. He’s one of the good guys. He’s going to lead them in wonderful ways. I have no fears and no reservations,” Metlzer said, adding, “At least for the next year and a half I will still be here to walk with them in the joys and sorrows of their lives.”

Metlzer said he realizes that for “many of the people in this parish – and the other two parishes involved – this has been their only church. They were born into this community. They celebrated all their sacraments here. I have an understanding of what it means to be part of this merger.

“I know that for some people, this is going to be difficult, but I see it as a wonderful, exciting, new challenge in the life of the church and this part of West Hartford.”

In a wise and loving manner, Metlzer said, “Sometimes the most loving thing is to let go.”

“What a difference 50 years can make,” said Bob Strickland of Saint Helena’s. Acknowledging the reasons for the merger “are complex,” he said, “but the lack of parishioners, and lack of ordained priests are the big-

gest factors. We Catholics will not lose our faith in God. We will survive the changes and continue to believe and serve.”

The church buildings will always retain the names by which they were dedicated, each newly created parish was assigned a name from a pool created by a Saints for Tomorrow survey.

“We applied them as we felt best,” Shanley said.

Gianna is from Italy. She was born October 4, 1922, the 10th of 13 children in her family, eight of whom survived to adulthood.

She considered medicine her mission and earned degrees in both medicine and surgery before opening a medical office near her hometown. A member of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, she was particularly drawn to the poor, elderly, mothers and babies.

She married Pietro Molla and dedicated herself to forming a Christian family.

Early in her pregnancy with their fourth child, she developed a fibroma tumor. Refusing an abortion and a hysterectomy, she opted to only have the tumor removed, knowing that continuing with the pregnancy could result in her own death. On April 21, 1962 – Holy Saturday

that year – Gianna Emanuela was delivered by Caesarean section. Seven days later she died of septic peritonitis. Her daughter became a doctor of geriatrics.

Gianna was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1994, and canonized in 2004. Her husband and their children were present at the canonization ceremony, and for the first time in the history of the Catholic church, a husband witnessed his wife’s canonization.

To become a saint, the Church requires proof of a miracle. In 2003, a woman who was 16 weeks pregnant sustained a tear in her placenta and all her amniotic fluid drained out. Doctors told her that her baby had no chance of survival. However, the mother said she prayed, asking for Gianna’s intercession, and later delivered a healthy baby.

The day of her death – April 28 – is Gianna’s feast day. She is the patron saint of mothers, unborn children and physicians.

Of the new parish, Shanley said, “It’s difficult but it’s very exciting.” While there is an understandable sadness “about losing institutions and structures that are very familiar,” he said many people “have spoken about the new possibilities.”

The reorganization offers a time to “stop and look at what they’re doing and what they can do better ... with more members.” **WHL**

The new parish will be named after Saint Gianna Beretta Molla, an Italian mother and physician.

The Church of Saint Brigid was the first Catholic church in West Hartford, built in 1919 to care for 150 Catholics.



Photo by Lynn Wolke



Courtesy photo

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SUMMER living

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Summer *Living*

Try something new

Adventuresome
cures for
a summertime
slumpby Nancy Thompson
LIFE Staff

The lazy, hazy days of summer. They're fun, except that all that laziness could easily slide into boring. No worries, though. We have lots of great ideas to inject some adventure into one's life.

In the trees**Storrs Adventure Park**

There are ropes courses with a twist.

Visitors navigate through platforms in the trees – connected by bridges made of cable, wood, rope and zip lines – that form aerial trails. They're color-coded by difficulty, ranging from beginner to advanced.

Climbers receive a safety orientation and wear climbing harnesses at all times. Guides are on hand throughout the courses.

Say "Storrs" and most people will think of the University of Connecticut. But it is also home to the Storrs Adventure Park, a forest climbing park where visitors can



Zippering above the surface of the water is one of many adventures at Brownstone Exploration & Discovery Park in Portland

experience adventure in the trees.

In all, the park has 15 zip lines, four difficulty levels and more than 100 bridges.

Tickets are available for two- and three-hour admissions, for groups of 10 or more, and for two-hour birthday parties. Prices vary by age and activity and range from \$22 for two hours for a college student with ID to \$47 for a three-hour climb for visitors age 12 and older.

The park is open daily through September 4, Sunday from 9 a.m. to 8

p.m., Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Friday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Storrs Adventure Park is located at 2007 Storrs Road, Storrs. More information at Storrsadventurepark.com, 860-946-0606 or info@storrsadventurepark.com

Nomads Outdoor Adventure

Nomads Outdoor Adventure offers another treetop experience.

The South Windsor park, which

claims to be the newest and most exciting such attraction, has six courses and more than 70 aerial challenges for visitors of varying abilities.

Tickets are available for three-hour sessions and range from \$28 to \$38 depending on age.

A night climb/twilight special is available Sunday through Thursday during the park's last two hours at a discounted rate.

During the summer, the park is open daily from 10 a.m. until dark.

Nomads Outdoor Adventure is

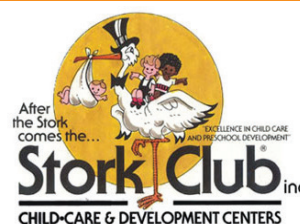
June 10 10 am - 6 pm
June 11 Noon - 6 pm

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located at 240 Governors Highway, South Windsor. More information at nomadsadventurequest.com, 860-290-1117 or info@nomadsadventurequest.com.

In the air

Fearless Flyers Academy

Learn to fly through the air, with or without the greatest of ease, at the Fearless Flyers Academy in Mystic. The school also offers classes in trampolining gymnastics, aerial fitness and a variety of aerial fabric activities.

Two-hour trapeze lessons, the academy's most popular, teach students how to perform many of the tricks they've seen at a circus and is available to everyone, from novices to accomplished gymnasts.

The classes are open to everyone from children age 6 and older. No prior experience is necessary, but there is a 180-pound limit.

Students in trampoline gymnastics classes learn proper techniques and skills, using safety-harness systems, crash mats and other safety equipment seldom found in traditional trampoline parks.

Again, no experience is necessary, and the classes are open to anyone 6 and older.

Aerial fitness classes focus on strength, conditioning and flexibility

in the areas that aerialists use most, especially shoulders, back and core muscles. Other classes include aerial fabrics, aerial static trapeze and aerial hoops. There's also a class that teaches students how to become a catcher, the person who snags the trapeze flyer in the air.

Fearless Flyers Academy is located at 800 Flanders Road, Mystic. More information at info@fearlesstapeze.com, 860-245-4154 or info@FearlessTrapeze.com.

Flight Trampoline Park

Flight Trampoline Park in New Britain has more than 13,000 square feet with 31 trampolines, including a dedicated area for children 6 and younger. It offers open jump sessions, special activities include Club Flight with lasers, and dodgeball.

Mondays from 4 to 9 p.m. are designated as family nights, and Tuesdays from 5 to 7 p.m. are set aside for visitors with special needs. Admission fees vary by activity and age, with discounts on family nights and special needs nights.

Flight Trampoline Park is located at 140 Production Court, New Britain. More information at flighttrampolinepark.com/Hartford, 860-505-8218 or hartford.info@flighttrampolinepark.com.



Riding an oversized tube down three whitewater rapids is only part of the fun at Farmington River Tubing in New Hartford

Soarin' Indoors

This Manchester attraction has two aerial ropes courses, one that is 2.5 feet off the ground and another 12 feet up. Both have similar challenges, such as rope bridges, cargo nets, swings and zip lines. Young guests, who must be tall enough to reach 60 inches while standing flat on the floor, will negotiate a series of increasingly difficult challenges.

Harnesses and cables are used for safety, and trained guides walk around the course to offer help when needed.

Soarin' Indoors has a two-story

playscape in the course room that is available for anyone climbing on the adventure course and also as a separate purchase for younger guests who aren't yet ready for the courses. The playscape is divided into a toddler area for children age 1 to 4 and a regular play area for older children.

The facility is open for individuals, groups, corporate events and private parties.

Admission costs \$13.95 for children 12 and younger and \$18.95 for visitors 13 and older.

Soarin' Indoors is open Monday, and Wednesday through Saturday



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Soarin' Indoors is located at 422 North Main Street, Manchester.

More information at soarindoors.com, 860-645-1595.

In and on the water

Brownstone Exploration & Discovery Park

Ever thought about jumping off a cliff? You can do it – safely – at this adventure center in one of the biggest brownstone quarries in the world.

The park, near the Connecticut River in Portland, also offers 14 zip lines and an extreme rope swing as well as swimming, snorkeling, kayaking, wall-climbing, wakeboarding and, for certified divers, scuba diving.

The cliff heights vary, so

beginners can immerse themselves gradually. The “ultimate extreme rope swing” can launch adventuresome visitors more than 20 feet out into the water. The more challenging wall climbs go up more than 70 feet, but there also are a few relatively easy climbs for the less skilled or less brave.

The park offers three wakeboard runs, two for beginners and one dedicated to more advanced riders. Kayaks, paddle boards, and other human-powered vehicles and toys are available to rent. The park has also become a popular destination for area dive centers to bring students, and for qualified divers to train and use underwater platforms.

Admission fees depend on activities, with \$26 for a general swimming pass, \$36 for an adventure sports pass, and \$46 for a wakeboard adventure sports pass.

Brownstone Exploration & Discovery Park is open daily from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Brownstone Exploration & Discovery Park is located at 161 Brownstone Avenue, Portland. More information at Brownstonepark.com, 866-860-0208.

Tubing on the Farmington River

The idea of floating on an oversized tube doesn't sound like an adventure, but Farmington River Tubing's

2.5-mile ride through three sets of whitewater rapids is enough to get riders' hearts thumping.

The \$20 fee, which must be paid in cash, includes the rental of a specially designed tube, a life jacket and a shuttle bus ride from the take-out point back to the starting point. Riders can tube again the same day for an additional \$10. Changing houses and restrooms are available.

It's a good idea to check ahead to get information about hours and river conditions.

Hours vary depending on weather and other factors. Tubing is tentatively available through the middle of June weekends from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and weekdays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., depending on weather. The attraction is open from the middle of June through late August daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and late August through Labor Day weekends from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and weekdays, dependent on weather and staffing, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. After Labor Day through the middle of September, riders must call for hours and river conditions.

Farmington River Tubing is located at 92 Main Street, New Hartford. More information at Farmingtonrivertubing.com, 860-693-6465.

In the extreme

Empower Leadership & Adventure Center

Empower Leadership & Adventure Center uses terms such as “special

agent,” heart-pumping, extreme, exhilarating and adrenaline-inducing to describe the activities at its Middletown facility.

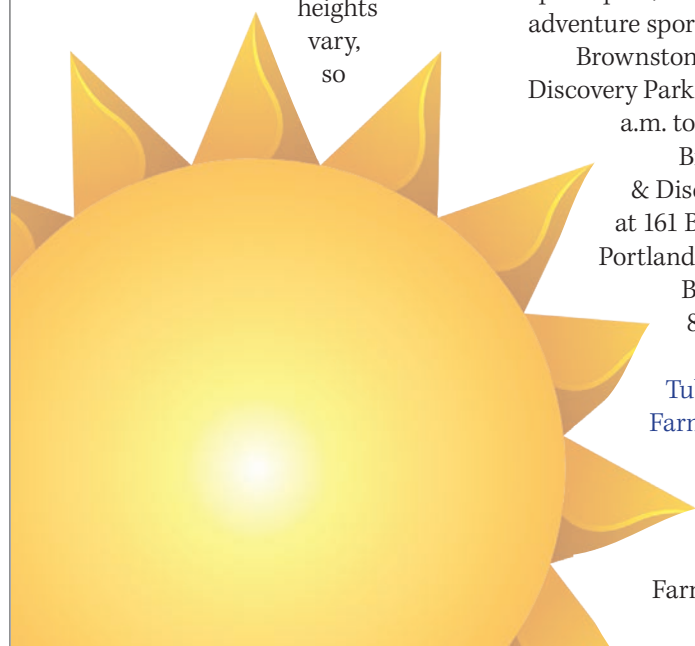
The zip line canopy adventure includes a fully guided half-mile journey 40 to 75 feet up in the tree tops, five zip lines ranging from 200 to 650 feet long, two adventure sky bridges and two high ropes climbing challenges.

Participants in the map-and-compass scavenger hunt will piece together clues, find hidden challenges and overcome obstacles.

Commando rappelling, a special operations adventure and the “Survivor 101 Adventure” add an extra element to participants' experiences. Other activities include partner-assisted tree climbing, a four-hour treetop zip line adventure, an aerial discovery adventure combining zip lines and tree-climbing, a deluxe adventure that combines three challenges into one, parties, and group outings for adults and youths.

The office is open daily during the summer from 8:30 a.m. to 4:40 p.m. The earliest tour usually leaves between 9 and 9:30 a.m., and the latest tour leaves around 5 or 6 p.m. In the fall, the schedule switches to Tuesday through Sunday.

Empower Leadership & Adventure Center is located at 2011 South Main Street, Middletown. More information at Leadershipsports.com, 860-638-4754 or Office@leadershipsports.com. **WHL**



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June

National Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Month
National Candy Month
National Country Cooking Month
National Dairy Month
National Iced Tea Month
National Papaya Month
National Soul Food Month

- 1 National Olive Day
- 1 National Hazelnut Cake Day
- 2 National Rotisserie Chicken Day
- 2 National Rocky Road Day
- 2 National Doughnut Day
- 3 National Chocolate Macaroon Day
- 3 National Egg Day
- 4 National Cheese Day
- 4 National Cognac Day
- 5 National Veggie Burger Day
- 5 National Gingerbread Day
- 5 National Moonshine Day
- 6 National Applesauce Cake Day
- 7 National Chocolate Ice Cream Day
- 8 National Name Your Poison Day
- 9 National Strawberry Rhubarb Pie Day
- 10 National Herbs and Spices Day

- 10 National Iced Tea Day
- 10 National Black Cow Day
- 10 National Rosé Day
- 11 National Corn on the Cob Day
- 11 National German Chocolate Cake Day
- 12 National Peanut Butter Cookie Day
- 12 National Jerky Day
- 14 National Strawberry Shortcake Day
- 14 National Bourbon Day
- 15 National Lobster Day
- 16 National Fudge Day
- 17 National Apple Strudel Day
- 17 National Eat Your Vegetables Day
- 17 National Cherry Tart Day
- 18 National Turkey Lovers' Day
- 19 National Martini Day
- 20 National Ice Cream Soda Day
- 20 National Vanilla Milkshake Day
- 21 National Peaches 'n' Cream Day
- 22 National Chocolate Eclair Day
- 22 National Onion Rings Day
- 23 National Pecan Sandies Day
- 24 National Pralines Day
- 25 National Catfish Day
- 25 National Strawberry Parfait Day
- 26 National Chocolate Pudding Day
- 29 National Almond Buttercrunch Day
- 30 National Bomb Pop Day (that red, white and blue Popsicle)

July

National Baked Bean Month
National Culinary Arts Month
National Grilling Month
National Horseradish Month
National Hot Dog Month
National Ice Cream Month
National July Belongs to Blueberries Month

- 1 National Creative Ice Cream Flavors Day
- 1 National Gingersnap Day
- 2 National Anisette Day
- 3 National Fried Clam Day
- 3 National Eat Your Beans Day
- 3 National Chocolate Wafer Day

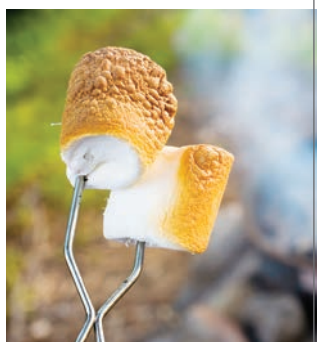
- 4 National Barbecued Spareribs Day
- 4 National Caesar Salad Day
- 5 National Apple Turnover Day
- 5 National Graham Cracker Day
- 6 National Fried Chicken Day
- 7 National Strawberry Sundae Day
- 7 National Macaroni Day
- 8 National Chocolate with Almonds Day
- 9 National Sugar Cookie Day
- 10 National Piña Colada Day
- 11 National Rainier Cherry Day
- 11 National Blueberry Muffin Day
- 11 National Mojito Day
- 12 National Pecan Pie Day
- 12 Eat Your Jello Day
- 13 National French Fry Day
- 13 National Beans 'n' Franks Day
- 14 National Grand Marnier Day
- 14 National Mac and Cheese Day
- 15 National Strawberry Rhubarb Day
- 15 National Tapioca Pudding Day
- 16 National Corn Fritters Day
- 16 National Ice Cream Day
- 17 National Peach Ice Cream Day
- 18 National Sour Candy Day
- 18 National Caviar Day
- 19 National Daiquiri Day
- 19 National Hotdog Day
- 20 National Lollipop Day
- 21 National Junk Food Day
- 22 National Penuche Fudge Day
- 23 National Vanilla Ice Cream Day
- 24 National Tequila Day
- 25 National Hot Fudge Sundae Day
- 26 National Bagelfest Day
- 26 National Coffee Milkshake Day
- 27 National Scotch Day
- 27 National Crème Brûlée Day
- 27 National Chili Dog Day
- 28 National Milk Chocolate Day
- 29 National Lasagna Day
- 29 National Chicken Wing Day
- 30 National Cheesecake Day
- 31 National Raspberry Cake Day

August

National Catfish Month
National Peach Month
National Coffee Month
National Goat Cheese Month

- 1 National Raspberry Cream Pie Day
- 2 National Ice Cream Sandwich Day
- 3 National Watermelon Day
- 3 National Grab Some Nuts Day
- 4 National Chocolate Chip Cookie Day
- 5 National Oyster Day
- 5 National Jamaican Patty Day
- 5 National Mustard Day
- 5 Mead Day
- 6 National Root Beer Float Day
- 7 National Raspberries 'n' Cream Day
- 8 National Frozen Custard Day
- 9 National Rice Pudding Day
- 10 National S'mores Day
- 11 National Raspberry Bombe Day
- 12 National Julienne Fries Day
- 13 National Prosecco Day
- 13 National Filet Mignon Day
- 14 National Creamsicle Day
- 15 National Lemon Meringue Pie Day
- 16 National Rum Day
- 18 National Fajita Day
- 18 National Ice Cream Pie Day
- 19 National Soft Ice Cream Day
- 20 National Chocolate Pecan Pie Day
- 21 National Spumoni Day
- 22 National Bao Day (small Chinese steamed buns with filling)
- 22 National Pecan Torte Day
- 23 National Sponge Cake Day
- 24 National Peach Pie Day
- 24 National Waffle Day
- 25 National Whiskey Sour Day
- 25 National Banana Split Day
- 26 National Cherry Popsicle Day
- 27 National Pots de Creme Day
- 28 National Cherry Turnovers Day
- 29 National Chop Suey Day
- 30 National Toasted Marshmallow Day
- 31 National Trail Mix Day

Compiled by Lynn Woike, LIFE Staff
Primary source: National Day Calendar



Summer *Living*

Spark a new interest

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

The summer season is the time to step out of comfort zones

With the warm days of summer approaching, some may find themselves yearning to break out of their typical routine to try something new.

In addition to often simply being enjoyable, trying new activities can also have positive benefits on mental and emotional well-being. According to a post

on Psychology Today by Dr. Alex Lickerman, breaking out of a comfort zone often requires a level of courage and forces participants to grow.

For others still, looking to try new things can allow people to create experiences they may have always wanted to try, by picking up a paintbrush or spatula, flying in a hot air balloon or riding a horse.

Culinary classes

For those who wish to experience something new but wish to stay a bit closer to their comfort zone, Sur La Table in Canton offers a variety of hands-on cooking classes every day throughout the year.

"It's really geared toward home cooks just for a new experience, maybe to try some new techniques," culinary lead Trace Alford said. "They're enjoyable, they're fun and they're a great learning experience."

The classes range in topics from Pizza on the Grill and Exploring Italy to baking courses Easy as Pie

and French Croissants 101.

"It's a great way to try new things if you aren't familiar with certain cuisines," Alford said. "A lot of people aren't sure about the Thai classes, but most of them then are very impressed because they never realized that it's not as difficult as they thought."

In addition to learning a new skill in the classes, Alford said that he has seen people start to treat the class as a social bonding time.

"A lot of people come for the social component," he said. "There's definitely bonding that happens. I think there are some who even meet in the class and then agree to come to another class together."

Work of art

While the art of cooking is one arena to explore,

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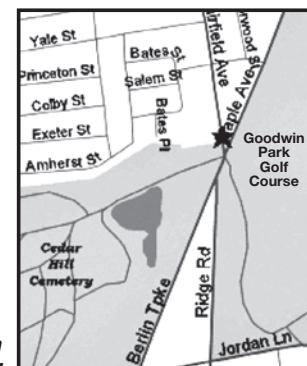
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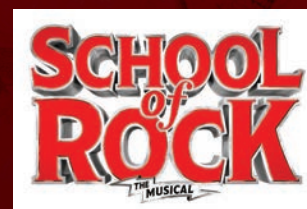
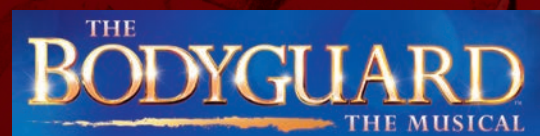
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ANA VILLAFANE AS GLORIA ESTEFAN IN ON YOUR FEET! (C) MATTHEW MURPHY.JPG

Summer *Living*



this region also has a variety of art for people to try.

"It's great to try just for the new experience," Farmington Valley Arts Center board member and artist in residence Carol Kaplan said. "We really have something for everybody."

The center offers a variety of classes in different mediums ranging from beginner levels to advanced techniques.

"We have a few exploration-type classes which are for people who think, 'Gee, I wonder if I really like clay. I'll take a couple classes just to see what it's about,'" Kaplan explained. "We also have folks who've had some experience and they want to hone their skills and take it to the next level. It really is something for everyone in a place that can be as rigorous as you want."

The Farmington Valley Arts Center has 18 studios where artists

create on a daily basis and Kaplan encourages people to go see what is being made.

"You can come to appreciate art, you can make art or you can watch someone creating it," she said.

The center also offers small classrooms where students can get direct instruction and feedback on their work, but according to Kaplan, it is the atmosphere created there that sets this space apart.

"For many people it's difficult to even get the process started," she said. "You have to feel that it's a safe place for that to happen, and we work to do that."

In many instances, Kaplan said that she has seen new students breathe a sigh of relief the first time they pick up a paintbrush.

"You can almost feel like this exhale," she said. "I think in this increasingly screen- and tech-filled

world, just to put your hands in clay, that tactile experience, is very valuable."

Horseback riding

"We have some people come who just want to check it off their bucket list," said Sharon Morin of Hillside Stable in Glastonbury. "A lot of people that haven't ridden before, even the older ones, say it's something they've always wanted to do."

Horseback riding at Hillside Stable is an option for people of all ages and any experience level.

"There's not really too much they need to know beforehand," Morin said. "They need to come with boots with heels and long pants, and we provide the helmets."

Hillside Stable is a small, family-run business. Morin said that her two daughters and niece run the stable, teach lessons and encourage people to try the activity if they never have before.

"A lot of people really enjoy it," Morin said. "Everybody here is friendly and patient, and it's always good to try a new thing."

Adult education

Those looking to try something new but are unsure what exactly is available to them need look no further than their local adult education programs.

"We have something for everyone," Ruth Kozlowski, enrichment program coordinator for West Hartford Adult Education, said. "We have ongoing classes and we just announced a lot of day trips coming up."

Through West Hartford Adult Education, people can take classes in anything ranging from yoga to movie

discussions to cookie decorating.

"One of our more popular ones is an Asian market tour and dumpling workshop," Kozlowski said. "One of our instructors takes people to a local Asian supermarket and afterwards they go back to where her husband and she own a tai chi academy and make dumplings."

Those looking to have a one-day experience can peruse the organization's variety of day trips, including an upcoming Titanic History tour in New York City June 3.

"They'll be seeing all these historic buildings related to people who were on the Titanic," Kozlowski explained.

Other upcoming trips include Saratoga horse racing, a tour of the Hudson Valley wineries and a Narragansett Bay Lighthouse cruise.

Regardless of what new activity is explored, people are encouraged to try something new.

"You never know if you'll find out that you really love something," Morin said. **WHL**

Hillside Stable is located at 524 Bell St., Glastonbury. Call 860-748-1894 or visit online at www.hillsidestable.net.

Sur La Table is located at 110 Albany Turnpike #609, Canton. Call 860-693-9560 or visit online at www.sur-latable.com.

The Farmington Valley Arts Center is located at 25 Arts Center Lane, Avon. Call 860-678-1867 or visit online at www.artsfvac.org.

West Hartford Adult Education is located at 50 South Main St., West Hartford. Call 860-561-6900 or visit online at www.whlifelifelearn.org.

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Summer *Living*

Suitcase smarts

Tips from travelers
on how to pack

by Alicia B. Smith
Associate Editor

Summer is the season to pack on up and hit the road for sunny destinations, mountainous destination or theme park destinations. It sounds simple enough — pack some sunscreen, an extra pair of comfortable shoes and go.

The reality is travel can be a nightmare, packing can be worse and just getting to the destination can be exhausting. We talked to some travelers who are on the go regularly and asked them for some tips on how to make things easier.

Keith Griffin
*Researcher/Writer U.S. News
& World Report automotive website*

I'm currently not traveling as much, but here is the one thing that was my travel tip: pack breakfast. I used to travel a lot to the West Coast covering automotive news for places like The Boston Globe and CarGurus.com, among others. Without fail, I'd be wide-awake by 4 a.m. with scheduled breakfast three or four hours later. So, I always made sure to have instant oatmeal packets or a protein bar (plus


a plastic spoon) in my carry-on bag. It made sure my day got off to a healthy start instead of munching on minibar M&Ms. It also allowed me more time to get work done, too, because I didn't need to leave my room in search of breakfast in the early morning.

Tom Devitt
*Assistant Men's Basketball Coach
University of Hartford*

There are three primary reasons for my travel, all business related: Recruiting, competing against

opponents at their home arenas, and finally for professional development. The recruiting component can bring with it the most unorthodox travel regimen. There are designated times during the year that college coaches can be out either evaluating or visiting with prospective student-athletes.

During these times, we can either attend sanctioned tournaments or individual games. What makes these times so unique is the fact that usually there are only three or four days where you can be out and often, you must




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Summer *Living*

evaluate two or three tournaments in multiple cities. We may watch one game in a given city, sprint to the airport after, fly across the country, and watch another prospect. This process may repeat itself two or three times during a recruiting weekend.

In terms of your own team playing on the road, there is definitely an organized routine that everyone is in that leads up to the game. You may get in the night before a game to an opponent's city. Often times, we are traveling back home directly after the game that night so our student-athletes can get to class the next morning.

In terms of tips, I think I can focus on two in particular. Less is more. Do not over pack. Especially when I recruit, sometimes I don't have the time to wait at airport baggage claims for luggage. Having fewer items with me may mean I can carry on everything I need onto the plane.

It's amazing how few items you need, especially when you are evaluating at recruiting events.

In addition, I like to grocery shop on the road, especially when I recruit. It becomes a cheaper and much healthier alternative to eating out. Most hotels now have refrigerators or kitchenettes, so it is easy to store fruit, bottled waters or even deli

meats. Drinking water on the road is important, as being in the air can dehydrate one quickly.

This sounds basic, but I cannot travel without my cell phone. The reasons though are many. I have direction apps downloaded to help me navigate anywhere I happen to find myself. I also have apps for discount travel and hotel options as well. Most importantly, I constantly scroll through family photos during down times as I always look forward to arriving home soon to my loved ones.

Travel is sometimes exciting, but never nearly as exciting as coming home.

Melissa Albright *Vice President* *Wethersfield Travel*

Whenever I'm off and have to pack, whether it's just for me or for whole family, I always have a list started days before I even begin packing. I have a basket of travel items in the closet including travel size toiletries, stain sticks, Ziploc bags, et cetera, that I'll go through first and grab what I need. I'm a fan of the Packing Pro app, which allows you to create customized lists based on the type of trip (Disney, beach, weekend, camping). With a list I'm more apt to feel like I didn't forget

anything when I get on my way.

I always make sure I have my drawstring laundry bag to put all our dirty laundry in. It's a good size and can hold about a week's worth of laundry for my whole family. Big or small, having a spot to put your dirty laundry keeps your hotel room somewhat organized.

These are some [often forgotten] items I share with families with young kids that are going on a beach vacation: night light, crib sheet, swim diapers, container to fill up milk at buffet restaurant, Thermos to keep milk cold or to keep hot water for formula bottles, Ziploc bags or small containers to stock up at the breakfast buffet for easy accessible snacks during the day, painter's tape and binder clips/clothes pins to cover outlets, pin up wires and secure blanket to stroller for sun protection when it's windy.

Jonathan Appell *Monument Conservator*

I travel for work and I do events. Not only do I have to pack, I am like a traveling road show. When I attend grave-stone preservation workshops I bring tools and supplies and also clothes and also, because I travel to different regions, I pack clothes for different regions.

I rarely fly.

Right now I am at an event in Raleigh, North Carolina, exhibiting, products sale.

I usually do my clothes last because I have so much.

Washing everything, biggest thing that is challenge for me. I work outside. I have work clothes and often need to change.

I end up bringing too much stuff; it's really hard to plan adequately.

It's a challenge. I could not have a big enough vehicle no matter what.

Occasionally I do, that is very different when you are flying which I do sometimes. It's super challenging. You don't want to bring too much

I went to California, my bag ended up somewhere else because I checked it and didn't have anything. Seasoned travelers only have carry-ons. If you lose your bag then you have nothing.

That literally happened to me and I had to go buy some stuff. Eventually my bag showed up a day or two later.

You can never know what you are going to need. Also predicting the weather, you go somewhere and it's unseasonably cool. It's hard to predict.

If there is a store around and you have the financial resources, but who wants spend their vacation time in a store. **WHL**



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Summer *Living*

New ideas for packing a picnic

by Sloan Brewster
Staff Writer

There are old school picnics and there are modern, fancy spreads.

Some prefer it the old-fashioned way, packing a few sandwiches and some chips and spreading it all on a blanket on the ground, or grabbing a pound of hamburger, some hotdogs, fresh buns and a side salad and trekking to the park to grill the chow under the sunlight.

Then there are the people who want everything gourmet, with an elaborate and delicious twist on the traditional picnic, including specialty sandwiches or hot, delectable dishes.

Hall's Market in West Hartford has offerings for an outdoor picnic and barbeque. "Old school and delicious,"

co-owner Jen Hettrick said of the offerings. What will make the grilling experience so tasty are the burgers, she said.

There's the spicy Texas burger, the popular cheddar bacon, the black and blue with crumbled blue cheeses and steak seasoning. There are also salmon burgers, black bean burgers and turkey burgers and a number of different brands of hotdogs.

Pair the meat with side salads – such as potato, macaroni salad or coleslaw – which are made daily and on hand at the deli, Hettrick said. There's no shortage of chips either, and plenty of cold drinks to pack into coolers.

Fitzgeralds Foods in Simsbury has offerings suited to the gourmet palate. There are salads made with a mesclun mix, including gourmet varieties such as a mixed berry salad with blueberries, blackberries, strawberries



and raspberries with gorgonzola cheese and blueberry pomegranate dressing, said co-owner Sandy Devoe.

The store also offers a concert menu for those planning to attend an outdoor concert and looking to enjoy a nice spread with the music.

Though owner Bryan DeVoe said this year's menu would be different, last year it was a grilled chicken sandwich with a side salad and a cannoli packed in a cooler.

He also recommends cheese or

fruit platters. Gourmet wraps and sandwiches are made daily as well..

"I've seen people bring rotisserie chicken [to concerts] because they're hot," he said.

There is also pizza and a case full of entrees, such as shepherd's pie, pasta dishes, baked chicken and quiche that staff can warm up in the microwave so picnickers can have hot choices.

Hall's also has sandwiches, including meatball and Philly cheese steak and a daily hot meal for \$5. **WHL**

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Summer *Living*

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‘Creating practical solutions’

Former mayor and Connecticut senator believes he’s up to the task of leading the state

by Abigail Albair
Executive Editor

A former West Hartford mayor and Connecticut senator is now eyeing a run for the state’s highest political office.

West Hartford resident Jonathan Harris stepped down from his position of commissioner at the Department of Consumer Protection in April and filed the necessary paperwork to explore a campaign for statewide office.

He indicated in his filing to establish an exploratory committee that his particular interest is in a run for governor, though he said he is leaving his options open.

Harris said he had been mulling over the potential of running for governor for some time, and spoke with Gov. Dannel Malloy and Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman more than once since last summer about the fact that he would not seek the office if either of them opted to do so.

Malloy announced in April that the current term is his final one. As of press time, Wyman had not yet made an announcement, and Harris will bow out of the race if she decides to run.

“I started maybe close to a year ago just trying to figure out where I’m going with my professional life,” Harris said. “The consumer protection job really was the best one I’ve had ever. The subject matter, the people, the things I got to learn about, the impact I felt I could have on protecting consumers and businesses ... I started looking ahead knowing there was a deadline to this and I wouldn’t have the job forever and thinking about what I wanted to do next with the expertise I’ve gained in my life.”

He said that, upon reflection, he realized what he enjoyed most about the DCP job was public service, which brought him to consider a gubernatorial run.

When Harris connected with Feiner Wolfson, a Hartford law firm, and the opportunity came about for him to build his law practice there, he decided now was the time to make a change.

“All of these things came together,” he said. “My next steps are, first to build my law practice so I can support my family, and to do what I’ve been doing in different capacities for many years: get around the

state to listen to people, to meet people. I’m really excited to be able to have this opportunity because these are really tough times. People feel squeezed and I can understand why. Everybody, all families, mine included, have that feeling. I really know how tough it is not just to run for statewide office, but how tough these jobs are, governor in particular. That actually gives me more energy because I’ve done these things before. I’ve been able throughout my career to not shy away from, but directly confront, controversial issues and bring people together to create practical solutions.”

Harris was mayor in the era of Blue Back Square and began the fight to bring the development to town.

He was asked to fill a vacancy on the Town Council in February of 2001 and then ran with a slate of Democrats, including immediate past Mayor Scott Slifka, the following fall to take back the majority on the governing body from the Republicans. He led the town through the recession following the 9/11 terrorist attacks and said that experience will help him lead the state.

“I would go back to those lessons,” he said when asked about tackling the state’s fiscal crisis. “We worked with our employees. We made sure the Town Council and Board of Education spoke to each other. We were able to consolidate certain departments. We were able to lower our healthcare costs and deal with our longterm costs. We looked innovatively at economic development to create jobs and keep us moving forward. Throughout town, we expanded our tax base in a solid way, in particular, in commercial [development] to take the pressure off the residential taxpayer. Those types of strategies are applicable to the state.”

As DCP commissioner, Harris reduced the workforce while adding responsibilities to the department’s plate, explaining that he believes he is skilled at finding efficiencies.

Most importantly, he said, there must be focus in governing, something he said he worked toward at the DCP by ensuring all department activities supported its core mission.

“Government is there to provide some core services for people and to protect



Jonathan Harris has formed a committee to explore a run for statewide office

health and safety. Government needs to do that, but there are things that government shouldn’t and can’t do and when we try to be everything for everybody, we tend not to do things as well,” he said. “You can’t be a spoon and a fork because then you can’t be either well.”

Process improvement is also an area in which Harris believes he excels, citing, for example, the fact that in recent years the DCP reduced response time for handling citizen complaints from six to eight weeks to a day.

He also reduced the time frame for obtaining a variety of licenses through the department.

Technology, he said, can help significantly boost process improvement, noting the fact that the DCP moved renewals for license applications online and is close to having all initial applications done online.

These types of changes can realize cost savings.

“Everything adds up. We look at everything we can save as something that helps,” he said.

A West Hartford native and Hall High School graduate, Harris holds a B.A. from Brandeis University and a J.D. from the New York University School of Law. He practiced law from 1990 to 2011 and owned and operated a real estate and economic

development firm from 2007 to 2011. During that time, he served three terms as a state senator in the 5th Senate district of the Connecticut General Assembly. He spent a year as deputy treasurer under State Treasurer Denise Nappier and then became executive director for the Connecticut Democratic Party.

Although he is professionally returning to the practice of law for the time being, Harris said he maintains a strong devotion to public service.

"One of the biggest parts of the job of a public servant is to have meaningful dialogue with citizens because, when you're in that job, you are immersed in what's going on: the facts, the policy. Other people are involved in their everyday lives – families, work activities – and you need to spend a lot of time not preaching to people, but talking to people and listening to people to help educate everybody. People will disagree, that's not bad, that's actually good. Reasonable people can go out and create a solution. That's what we

did in West Hartford and why we were able to deal with a lot of controversial issues and move forward."

Harris was part of the process to conceptualize and ultimately build Bristow Middle School, something he said he accomplished by engaging all stakeholders and giving everyone a voice, a concept that can be applied to bipartisan politics.

"You can make things a knock-down, drag-out brawl or you can utilize the tension to do great things," he said.

As mayor, he organized monthly meetings of the superintendent, town manager, minority leader and board of education chair to discuss the budget process in that season, but also to get to know one another and ensure transparency and communication.

"That sets a better table for decision making," he said. "That piece is crucial to good government."

As he looks at a potential run, he said he knows a focus for any candidate will be finding ways to

help people live, work and retire in this state.

"Priorities have to be fashioned around real problems people are facing in every day lives," he said. "There are times when government needs to play a role and when government needs to get out of the way and let the private sector create jobs and deal with issues on the ground. It's a balance, but I have a sense of that."

Despite his busy professional schedule, Harris is a dedicated family man who spends time nurturing his West Hartford roots.

He lives in town with his wife, Lucy. Their son, Spencer, recently graduated from the University of Connecticut.

Harris has also been active over the years on a variety of nonprofit organization boards.

"I have this idea that my experience would make me a good governor," he said simply. "I believe I can help create practical solutions to problems we face every day." **WHL**



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Bruce Lane



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Earl

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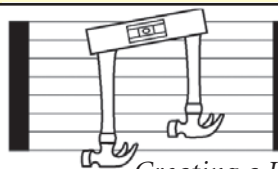


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Writer's block

Fine print

by **Lynn Woike**
Editor

It may be print – and tiny – but it's far from fine. I'm talking about the 8,400 words filling 17 pages that accompanied my online service agreement I was forced to accept to activate a new credit card issued to avoid a fraudulent charge from being processed.

I swear only those who earn an advanced degree in fine print can understand it; the average consumer has no idea what it means. Trying to understand the words and comprehend their affect gave me brain cramps. Like millions of Americans, I appreciated their kindness in declaring, "We suggest you read this document carefully and print a copy for your reference. You may refer back to it at any time by accessing the Agreements & Disclosures tab within the website."

The first sentence contained 66 words that made little sense. I found clauses that said "USE OF THE ONLINE SERVICE IS AT YOUR SOLE RISK" and "YOU ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE MAKE NO WARRANTY THAT THE ONLINE SERVICE WILL BE UNINTERRUPTED, TIMELY, SECURE OR ERROR-FREE UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED ON THE SITE OR IN ANY APPLICABLE AGREEMENT."

Since I wanted to be able to use the card, I just gave up and checked the box stating I'd read and agreed to the terms. I reasoned that whatever it is I agreed to was mandatory if I intended to use the card, so I didn't have much of a choice. I couldn't argue individual details with the company. So on blind faith, consumer ignorance and a prayer to

Lady Justice, I accepted it, knowing I might have given them the power to sell my information to others for a profit and raise my interest rate to 35 percent compounded daily if I am late with a payment.

It hardly mattered, because the agreement also contained the phrase, "We may amend or change this Agreement (including applicable fees and service charges) from time to time, in our sole discretion..."

There's fine print on phone bills that I no longer try to understand after learning the FCC line charge did not actually go to the Federal Communications Commission, but that rather was going to the phone companies to connect to long-distance service.

It's only the fine print of the exercise machine or program chiming some person lost 50 pounds in six weeks that explains a restricted-calorie diet is required, and that the average weight loss was 18 pounds.

In a print ad trying to hurry you to a price-rollback sale is a red banner proclaiming, "Save 80 percent" in large white letters. You have to be an ant with a magnifying glass to see the "up to" in thin black type after the word "save."

On the back of the red-and-white Macy's Star Pass offering \$10 off my next purchase of \$30 or more is the fine print: "Valid on a wide selection of regular priced and sale items." Then it goes on to list about 100 exclusions including Home, Deals of the Day, Doorbusters, Everyday Values, Last Act, special orders, Super Buys, athletic clothing, athletic shoes, athletic accessories, bridal dresses, china, crystal, cosmetics, designer jewelry, fragrances, furniture, watches, designer sportswear, electronics, lug-

gage, maternity, Apple Products, Eileen Fisher, Hanky Panky, Marc Jacobs, Spanx, The North Face, UGG, Vans, Vitamix, and products offered by vendors who operate leased departments including Burberry, Gucci and Louis Vuitton.

To read the list, your bifocals need bifocals.

All kinds of things end up in the fine print. Take the possible side effects of drugs. Miraplex, for instance, which is used to treat Parkinson's disease and Restless Legs Syndrome, can result in intense urges to gamble, binge eat and spend money without the ability to control these urges. There's an antidepressant that may increase suicidal thoughts or attempts, hallucinations, seizures or coma.

Cruise contracts can include clauses that do not guarantee the safety of passengers and state the ship can deviate from the itinerary for any reason without providing any kind of compensation. Terms of service agreements can contain language saying providers cannot be held liable for their own negligence.

Investment portfolios, gym memberships and insurance policies are all loaded with mumbo jumbo in mouse type.

It makes me feel powerless, exploited and conned.

Some federal agencies have tried to mandate documents in "plain English" so that they might be more easily understood. If that's happening, you couldn't prove it by me.

All these disclaimers, conditions, terms and agreements are written in legalese. I am convinced the convoluted jargon gives attorneys – who are the only ones fluent in it – their job security. That's just the opposite for me, where clear, concise writing is my job security. **WHL**

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BY MARK DIXON

WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]



Going into the 2017 Hurricane Season...

The Atlantic Hurricane Season of 2016 featured 15 named storms, 7 reached hurricane status and of those 4 became MAJOR hurricanes. Last year was a bit more active than normal, which was accurately forecast. An “average season” includes 12 Tropical Storms (wind 39mph or greater), 6 Hurricanes (wind 74mph or

greater) and 3 Major Hurricanes (111mph or greater).

When it comes to naming, there are 6 lists used in rotation for the Atlantic Basin (including the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean)... alternating gender, starting at the top of the alphabet. Two from last year, Matthew and Otto, have been retired by the WMO (World Meteorological

Organization, a group of international scientists) due to their deadly or destructive nature as they both wreaked havoc through the Caribbean. They’ll be replaced with Martin and Owen, when the list is reused in 2022.

The Atlantic season runs from June 1st through November 30th ... although in April, Arlene formed. This is only the 2nd time in the sat-

ellite era for one to do so in that month. Early outlooks are calling for a slightly less active 2017, due to cooler-than-normal Atlantic sea surface temperatures and potential/slow El Nino development.

Regardless of how many storms develop, the bigger issue: if and where they will make land-fall – something that is extremely difficult to forecast. **WHL**

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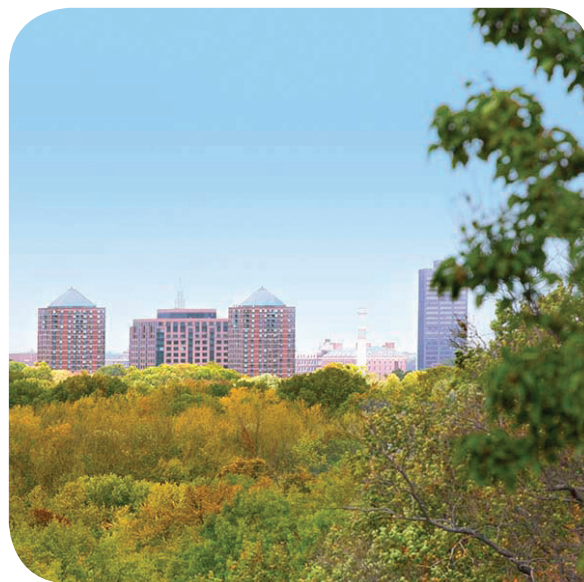
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